

THE SHARED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN FACULTY IN COUNSELOR  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS:  
A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

Black women faculty (BWF) are underrepresented in university settings when compared to national representation in the population. This underrepresentation of Black women is also seen in counselor education; however, there is a lack of research regarding the factors that influence BWF to pursue and secure tenured positions at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Given the current underrepresentation of BWF at PWIs, there is a need to examine the factors that would increase the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty. Prior research has mainly focused on factors that supported the recruitment and retention of Black women doctoral students, but little research has been conducted in examining the factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of BWF. To this end, a qualitative thematic analysis design was used to gain knowledge of the factors that impact the recruitment and retention of BWF members in a counselor education program at a PWI based on their personal experiences. The implications of these themes in the recruitment and retention of BWF in counselor education and supervision and recommendations for future research are discussed.

*Keywords:* Black women faculty, counselor education, predominately White institution, recruitment, retention, advancement

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Gabriel Michael & Genesis Noelle Ybarra.

“Great things come from hard work and perseverance. No excuses.” –Kobe Bryant

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The ESV of 1 Corinthians 15:10 reads, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.” First, I give honor and praise to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because without him, this accomplishment would not have been possible. I have weathered many storms throughout my doctoral journey, but God never left me, nor did he forsake me. It is to him that I give the highest acknowledgments of praise to.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, I will present an overview of this study examining the shared experiences of Black women faculty (BWF) in counselor education and supervision at predominately White institutions (PWIs). The rationale for this study is provided along with the statement of the problem, purpose, and significance of the study. Further, I present the research question and theoretical framework, which will provide a foundation for this study.

### **Background of the Problem**

Race is an essential factor in all American social institutions, including higher education institutions (Barber et al., 2020). The variations in numbers of faculty reveal “raced, gendered, and classed” policies and procedures that have their origins in the history of racism in America (Martin et al., 2019). Over the past 40 years, BWF have been underrepresented in higher education. Though the number of BWF has doubled from 11,662 to 21,713, there was only a 0.3% increase in the number of BWF compared to a 9.8% increase in White women faculty (Finkelstein et al., 2016; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). In 2019, of the 238,350 faculty members employed at universities and 4-year colleges, only 6,000 were Black females (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019), highlighting the current underrepresentation of Black female faculty members.

The racial and ethnic imbalance in higher education resembles the trend in K-12 public schools in the United States, where teachers are less racially and ethnically diverse than their students (Davis & Fry, 2019). More than 13% of the U.S. population is Black (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019); however, fewer than a quarter of faculty members have identified as non-White, with 6% self-identifying as Black (NCES, 2018). Additionally, 14% of undergraduates identify as Black, which is more than double the percentage of Black faculty members (NCES, 2018;

Whitford, 2020). Given the importance of diversity and equity, these statistics support the need to examine the factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of BWF in academia.

### **Status of Black Women in Higher Education**

The lack of racial diversity among higher education faculty and leaders has been the trend in academia (Beachum, 2015), with racial stereotypes leading to discrimination against Blacks in the labor market such as higher education (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; William & Rucker, 2000). Only 6% of full-time faculty members have self-identified as Black (Colby & Fowler, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). White women have accounted for 70.4% of the total female faculty positions, whereas Black women accounted for 5% of the entire faculty employed at universities and 4-year colleges (National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics [NCSES], 2018). The proportionate presence of Black women among all full-time faculty has also remained virtually unchanged in two decades (Finkelstein et al., 2016). Further, 5% of BWF held tenured positions compared to 76% of White women faculty, and 6% were on a tenure track compared to 67% of White women faculty (NCSES, 2018). Similarly, White women hold 392,000 doctoral degrees compared to the 29,000 held by Black women, reflecting a 13:1 ratio of education attainment (NCES, 2018; NCSES, 2018).

Historically, White male faculty served as institutional gatekeepers who controlled access to academic ranks and determined who is qualified as well as what rules to apply, break, or modify (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008; Moore, 1988). This has resulted in institutional policies at PWIs that serve to maintain the status quo, creating a hostile work environment for Black faculty seeking employment at these institutions. Currently, many of these gatekeeping functions remain institutionalized and professionalized, contributing to the continued underrepresentation of Black faculty at PWIs (Corra, 2020). Black faculty have experienced exclusion from and

marginalization within their disciplines because of their race as well as their willingness to challenge racial stereotypes in academia (Green et al., 2018). In addition, their commitment to examining the experiences of Black people in America has often placed their careers at risk (Du Bois, 1903; Martin et al., 2019).

### **Barriers Affecting BWF**

Black women at PWIs across the United States face a multitude of issues. Black women in academic institutions are often connected in their struggle to be accepted and respected and to have a voice in an institution with many views (Collins, 2001). As a result, BWF tend to suffer from isolation while struggling to be included (Collins, 2001; Ferguson, 2013; Frazier, 2011). Throughout the literature, 10 barriers and challenges were identified that BWF at PWIs. Studies found that Black woman faculty reported experiencing racism, sexism, and the intersectionality of race and gender (Zeligman et al., 2015), microaggressions and stereotype threat, the glass ceiling and glass cliff (McGhee, 2017), disinterest in research topics (Parker, 2017), limited opportunities to hold leadership roles, and isolation due to the absence of role models and mentors (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2010; Perna et al., 2007). These 10 barriers can be classified into three categories: explicit discrimination, implicit discrimination, and barriers to advancement.

#### ***Explicit Discrimination***

Black women have had to withstand the fear and stress related to racism (Allison, 2017; Jones, 1997). They have been rejected, discriminated against, wrongly judged, and even harmed because of their skin color (Bobo et al., 1997). Women are also subjected to unique, aggression-based, and exclusionary-based discriminatory behaviors by other women (Jones, 1997). BWF

have reported experiencing numerous oppressive experiences, including discrimination, harassment, and disrespect, primarily in educational settings (Bobo, 2017).

### ***Implicit Discrimination***

BWF experience implicit discrimination in myriad ways. Three of the most reported types discussed in the literature include microaggressions; stereotype threat; and the glass ceiling, glass cliff, and concrete wall.

**Microaggressions.** Racial discrimination has typically been viewed as overt, making it easy to dismiss microaggressions to other factors (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012). But microaggressions are also negative, hostile, or derogatory acts toward members of marginalized communities (Parente & Kaplin, 2017; Pierce, 1970; Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions highlight the everyday biases members of marginalized groups experience, and they have been compared to “death by one thousand cuts” (Parente & Kaplin, 2017, para. 1). This can make experiencing microaggressions even more devastating than the experience of overt racism, as the victim ends up questioning their own perceptions and reactions (Nnawulezi & Sullivan, 2014). Microaggressions are subtle slights and insults that can affect the individual cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally (Poteat & Spanierman, 2012). Racial minorities experience different types of microaggressions that vary within social structures (Ashley, 2014; Cole, 2001; Nnawulezi & Sullivan, 2014). Although much research has been conducted about microaggressions and their effects, these incidents have only been minimally explored in higher education settings (e.g., see Cropps, 2018).

**Stereotype Threat.** Stereotypes about race and gender can create dual obstacles for Black women in professional roles. Internalized racism (the process of internalizing negative stereotypes of one’s racial group), and genderism, may exacerbate feelings of shame, guilt, and

self-blame that accompany experiences of racial trauma, especially for women of color (Pieterse, 2018; Speight, 2007). In addition, women faculty experience conflict between stereotypes of women (gentle, nurturing, communal) and stereotypes of leaders (independent, assertive, competitive). As a result, BWF are fighting the stereotypical perception of Black women instead of being seen as Black women. Referred to as stereotype threats, the fear of confirming pejorative stereotypes negatively affects their performance within a stereotyped domain (Fassiotto et al., 2016; Rydell et al., 2014; Steele et al., 2002). Stereotype threat is associated with decreased performance and performance expectations as well as lower motivation and maladaptive career goal attainment beliefs (Deemer et al., 2016). If exposed to a stereotype long enough, those who are stigmatized may begin to question whether the stereotype is legitimate, possibly triggering increased doubts within themselves about their competence (Casad et al., 2017; Deemer et al., 2016). Experiencing stereotype threat leads individuals to avoid domains in which they are stereotyped as not belonging, such as women in leadership (Casad & Bryant, 2016). Further when individuals face stereotype threat, they are less likely to pursue advancement, especially when they are one of few members belonging to their racial group (Hoyt et al., 2010).

**The Glass Ceiling, Glass Cliff, and Concrete Wall.** The glass ceiling is a metaphor used to represent an invisible barrier that has historically prevented minorities, specifically Black women, from advancing to higher positions (De Welde et al., 2016). Even Black women who break through the glass ceiling are placed on a glass cliff and expected to lead during periods of organizational instability (Ryan et al., 2016). The glass cliff describes a phenomenon where women ascend into leadership positions where their risk of failure is high (McGhee, 2017).

Black women's contributions are also overlooked, and they are perceived as "nurturing" figures or "ill-equipped" to be leaders, except in times of a crisis (Ryan et al., 2016).

Although the glass ceiling depicts the barriers and challenges of women, a concrete wall signifies the barriers faced exclusively by Black women (Pierre, 2019). The unyielding structure of a concrete wall permits few women of color to break through it. The concrete wall phenomenon is also referred to as the "Black ceiling" (Catalyst, 1999; Sepand, 2015). These three phenomena are the challenges faced by Black women, most prevalently in higher education.

### ***Barriers to Advancement***

Though Black women have been able to enter education as teachers at the elementary and secondary levels, professorships in academia are still limited (Asare, 2019; Hull et al., 1982). The tenure process has also not been inclusive of Black women. Existing literature names a few reasons for the lack of BWF in tenured positions: historical discrimination, the lack of role models in similar roles, the stress of balancing roles as a professional and a caregiver, the prevalence of microaggressions, and being made to feel undeserving of the position (Allison, 2008; Asare, 2019).

Studies have also shown that White faculty are not always interested or supportive of their Black colleagues' research type (Perna et al., 2007). Attempts to advance scholarship from a Black epistemology are challenging because the perception is that issues about people of color in higher education, no matter what the topic, is not about a larger population and do not relate to the discipline scholarship in general (Moses, 1998). For example, Deirdre Paul was criticized because her participants were the same race and gender as her, but she argued that White researchers are not criticized when they research White participants (Paul, 2001). Research

carried out by BWF is devalued or ignored if the subject of research deals with minority concerns, as these topics are not considered “mainstream” (Turner & Myers, 2000). Any research work carried out from a Black perspective is not regarded as credible enough to grant scholarship, diluting their work and efforts and restricting their chance of availing tenure in PWIs (Parker, 2017; Turner & Myers, 2000).

Existing research also indicates the lack of support systems and networks and unwelcome, insensitive, and isolative environments as impediments to Black women’s academic success (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Lack of teaching and research support and mentoring have surfaced as a complexity Black women navigate in navigated PWIs (Kelly & Winkle-Wagner, 2017). A lack of representation results in fewer role models for women of color and limited peer support from those with a shared experience.

Barriers for women in higher education not only raise the question of fairness but place severe limitations on the success of educational institutions themselves (De Welde et al., 2016). Recruitment and retention of diverse faculty should be a fundamental goal for higher education institutions because there is value in learning environments incorporating diverse perspectives, knowledge, and points of view. The general themes from the literature indicate that not much has changed over the past few decades, and racially diverse faculty are still not being retained at the higher ranks within higher education (Few et al., 2007; Gasman et al., 2011). Though the number of Black faculty recruited to PWIs has slightly increased (Modica & Mamaseishvili, 2010), they are still primarily underrepresented compared to White faculty at these institutions (Kelly et al., 2017).

## **Mentorship**

Faculty mentoring is an institutional component that assists with student and faculty retention (Sheridan et al., 2015). It is distinguishable from other retention activities in that the emphasis becomes on mutual learning. Mentoring is about creating an enduring and meaningful relationship with another person, focusing on the quality of that relationship (Salinitri, 2005). This includes factors such as mutual respect, willingness to learn from each other, and the use of interpersonal skills (Salinitri, 2005). However, the underrepresentation of faculty of color and women in higher education dramatically reduces the opportunities for graduate students from these selfsame groups to find mentors of their race, ethnicity, or gender (De Welde et al., 2016).

The retention of Black faculty members plays a vital role in retaining Black students through mentoring, instruction, and other forms of formal and informal support, such as serving as advisors to predominately Black student organizations (Martin et al., 2019). The lack of mentoring is one of the significant reasons colleges and universities have had difficulty retaining Black students (Davis et al., 2011), but same-sex and same-gender mentoring combined with Black students' mentoring by non-Black mentors may be an effective way to promote the academic successes of Black women in higher education (Grant & Simmons, 2008). Black professors also provide necessary, if not "natural," support sources for other historically disadvantaged groups. Keeping this in mind, a growing body of literature suggests the need for and benefit of developing support programs for faculty of color, such as implicit bias training, family-friendly policies, and mentorship opportunities (Ackelsberg et al., 2009; Yun et al., 2016).

The retention of BWF is strongly influenced with the lack of mentoring opportunities available to them at PWIs. This absence results in differential experiences for women and

minorities in higher education (Miller, 2015). Therefore, BWF remain vastly underrepresented at PWIs (Grant & Ghee, 2015). The shortage of mentoring has been cited as a crucial reason for women's lack of leadership advancement (Nickerson, 2020). BWF seeking leadership positions often lack influential mentors based on similarities such as race and gender, which contributes to the shortage of Black women in full-time faculty positions (Beckwith, 2019). Mentorship can aid in leadership attainment and provide networking opportunities (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016), but the process and examination of mentoring for Black women in higher education still needs attention.

Further, mentoring for women in academia contributes to professional success and career advancement. Yet, for BWF, access to and quality of mentoring remains an issue, particularly for women on the tenure track (Edwards et al., 2021). Furthermore, BWF find it difficult to speak to White colleagues regarding their experiences of racism, sexism, privilege, and inequity because White privilege becomes the lens through which these experiences are re-interpreted and often dismissed (De Welde et al., 2016; Parker, 2017). But having strong faculty networks providing social and professional support facilitates the advancement of BWF in academia (McConner, 2014; Parker, 2017; Robinson, 2018; Wiecek & Hamilton, 2013). Mentoring is a way to help faculty generally and prevent BWF and administrators' social isolation. Mentoring has been shown to impact job satisfaction, lower attrition rates, and facilitate career advancement and progression (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Jenkins, 2005; Parker, 2017; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005; Thomas, 2018). Black women have described the ideal mentor as one who provides encouragement, positivity, communication, trust, faith, reassurance, patience, and understanding, symbolic of a mother-like figure (Thomas, 2018).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Women of color are underrepresented in university settings, as both students and faculty, when compared to national representation within the population (Zeligman et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies document the absence of tenured Black faculty in higher education (NCSES, 2018). This underrepresentation of Black women is also seen within counselor education (Behar-Horenstein et al., 2012; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2019). However, there is a lack of research regarding the factors that influence Black female faculty to pursue and secure tenured positions at PWIs. Although research has been conducted examining the retention of Black doctoral students, there are few studies that examine the retention and advancement of BWF members at PWIs examining the factors that support the recruitment and retention of Black female faculty at PWIs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge of the factors that impact the recruitment and retention of BWF members in a counselor education program at a PWI based on their personal experiences. Given the current underrepresentation of BWF at PWIs, there is a need to examine the factors that would increase the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty. Prior research has mainly focused on factors that supported the recruitment and retention of Black women doctoral students, but little research has been conducted in examining the factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of BWF. Understanding the factors that support the recruitment and retention of BWF at PWIs will provide valuable insight for counselor educators seeking to increase diversity within their faculty.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that will guide this study are:

1. What factors influenced Black females to accept faculty positions in a counselor education program at a PWI?
2. What factors influenced the retention of Black female faculty currently employed in a counselor education programs at a PWI?

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The study's data will only be obtained from Black faculty members at a single institution who are teaching in a counselor education program. Additionally, the data will only be collected from Black female faculty members who choose to participate in the study. Limitations may come from potential participants being hesitant to participate in the study for fear of retribution. In addition, participants may be hesitant to fully describe their shared experiences due to the uniqueness of their experiences. As a result, their story may be used to identify them, despite attempts to conceal their identity. A final limitation is the researcher's bias, as I identify with potential participants being a Black female in a counselor education program. This similarity could result in some emotions as participants share their unique experiences.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Black*: Black is defined as individuals who self-identify racially as Black, African American, or African.

*Predominately White institution (PWI)*: This term is used to describe an institution of higher learning whose White student enrollment is identified as being over 50% of the student population (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

### **Significance of the Study**

BWF teaching at PWIs face many barriers not experienced by White faculty (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015), such as racism, sexism, and the intersectionality of race and gender (Zeligman

et al., 2015), microaggressions and stereotype threat, the glass ceiling and glass cliff (McGhee, 2017), disinterest in research topics (Parker, 2017), limited opportunities to hold leadership roles, and isolation due to the absence of role models and mentors (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2010; Perna et al., 2007). Furthermore, though women faculty are underrepresented in higher education, there is a disproportional representation of BWF as compared to White women faculty. White women have accounted for 70.4% of the total female faculty positions, whereas Black women accounted for 5% of the entire faculty employed at universities and 4-year colleges (NCSES, 2018). However, in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs, 10.4% of full-time faculty self-identified as being Black, compared to the 43.01% of full-time faculty that self-identified as being White (CACREP, 2019). But although research has focused on the recruitment and retention of Black women doctoral students and the factors that influence the recruitment and retention of BWF, little research has focused on these factors with BWF. This study seeks to address this gap, which can help promote the recruitment and retention of Black women in counselor education and supervision programs.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The current literature on student and faculty development in higher education does not explicitly address Black women (Porter, 2017), highlighting the need to examine the shared experiences of Black women in academia. Given the unique factors that shape the experiences of Black women, the theoretical framework that guided this study is Black feminist thought (BFT). BFT was developed to explain the impact of social inequalities, specifically, how they are organized, endure change and resist within the experiences of Black women (Collins, 2001). In 2000, Collins made a connection between the historical exclusion of Black women's ideas from academic studies, the mainstream academic discourse, and the feminist movement. Further,

Black women are uniquely situated at the intersection of two prevalent systems of oppression: race and gender (Collins, 2015). Black women cannot fully be conceptualized using feminist thought or Black social thought theoretical approaches; the former assumes Whiteness, and the latter assumes maleness. Therefore, the makeup of Black women's identity and consequently their experiences are grounded in their position as outsiders within spaces of oppression, such as in higher education (Collins, 2015).

BFT is a theoretical approach that centralizes and validates the intersecting dimensions of race and gender uniquely experienced in the lives of Black women (Collins, 2001; Grant, 2012). As a result, BFT focuses on the perspectives and experiences of Black women. It is grounded in the importance of hearing Black women's voices, acknowledging that Black women have a unique perspective (Allison, 2017; Goepfert, 2018). BFT stresses the importance of examining the intersecting power systems of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, religion, and citizenship when interpreting Black women's experiences to produce new knowledge (Collins, 2014; Scott, 1985). BFT is grounded in four tenets: (a) the lived experiences as a criterion of meaning, (b) use of dialogue, (c) the ethics of care, and (d) the ethics of personal accountability (Collins, 2001). These four tenets provide a framework for ensuring that black women's voices are heard and validated (Collins, 1986, 2000, 2001). It also provides the foundation for expanding the body of knowledge about Black women that accounts for the intersection of race and gender.

### **Relevance to this Study**

BFT is relevant for this research because Black women developed it as an empowerment tool (Collins, 2000). This theory represents the intersection of the dual identity of being a Black woman and encourages those looking to understand Black women to consider both. Most

importantly, BFT is a standpoint designed to redefine and reconstruct a new framework of lack of womanhood that allows for internalizing positive perceptions of themselves, their experiences, and their communities (Collins, 2000; Joseph, 2020). BFT provides a framework for understanding why Black women need the opportunity to seek and identify support techniques based on their view of themselves and the world (Williams et al., 2005). Using BFT sheds light on how to help Black women by gaining perspectives from them directly. BFT urges educational leaders to understand that Black women have experienced what female “members of the majority group do not experience” (Williams et al., 2005, p. 183; see also Thomas, 2018). Thus, exploring Black women’s mentoring experiences through BFT can help better equip educational leaders to support them, especially at institutions where they are typically the minority.

### **Organization of Remaining Chapters**

This dissertation includes five chapters. Chapter 2 will provide a thorough review of the literature. The statistics of BWF at PWIs will be presented, along with the barriers and challenges experienced by this group, current employment trends of BWF at PWIs, and the role of mentorship. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology used to conduct this study, including participant and survey information and the statistical procedures employed to gather and analyze the data. Chapter 4 will report the results and findings based on the hypothesis testing through statistical analyses. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the study and details implications of the findings for counselor education.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the background of the problem: how BWF have continuously maintained a minimal presence at PWIs. Although mentorship has been cited as helping many BWF procure and succeed in their academic careers, access to mentors of the same

gender and same race remains an issue for Black women, affecting the retention of BWF. The theoretical framework chosen for this study, BFT, which will allow me to examine the barriers and challenges faced by BWF through a lens designed to capture their experiences as women and as Black Americans. In conclusion, Chapter 1 gave a background of the study and its significance.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

BWF are highly qualified and potential candidates for junior faculty positions in academia (Assari, 2017; Márquez-Magaña, 2020). Additionally, they serve as an integral component to diversify the faculty, particularly in research universities. However, higher education serves as a source of increased stress and inequalities for talented BWF (Márquez-Magaña, 2020). This chapter is organized into sections representing themes revealed from the literature. These themes include: (a) statistics of BW, (b) the evolution of BWF at PWIs, (c) barriers and challenges experienced by BWF at PWIs, (d) current trends of BWF at PWIs, (e) experiences of BWF at PWIs, and (f) the impact of mentorship on the retention on BWF.

### **Statistics of BWF**

The college graduation rate for women of color for all college majors combined is much lower than for high school graduation, with 40% ending between a high school and bachelor's degree (National Research Council, 2013). Of high school graduates, 17.8% of women of color graduate from college in contrast to 29.9% for White women (National Research Council, 2013). This results in White women becoming overrepresented in academia relative to their representation in the general population and relative to their graduation rates for high school, leading to women of color becoming unrepresented relative to both (National Research Council, 2013).

Nationwide, just over 5% of all full-time faculty members at colleges and universities in the United States are Black (Kelly et al., 2017; Walkington, 2017). The percentage of Black faculty at almost all the nation's high-ranking universities is significantly below the national average of 5.2%. In 2003, 5.3% of all full-time faculty in American higher education consisted of Blacks in full-time faculty positions, but their presence in faculty ranks is less than half the

Black student enrollment figure. Thus, Blacks make up 12% of the total enrollment in higher education (“The Snail-Like Progress of Blacks into Faculty Ranks of Higher Education,” 2007). Further, only 6% of full-time faculty members self-identified as Black, compared to 12.7% of the U.S. population who self-identify as Black (Colby & Fowler, 2020). Looking at the numbers closely, of the total number of faculty at 4-year universities in 2019 (238,350), only 6,550 were Black male faculty and 6,000 were Black female faculty compared to 140, 850 White male faculty and 84,950 White female faculty (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). In terms of positions, 34,000 White females held full-time positions, whereas only 2,400 Black females held a full-time position (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

Black faculty are also underrepresented in higher education leadership positions. According to the NCES data in 2016, 79% of faculty members were White, who mostly had the position of full professor, endowed chairs, college and university presidents, and trustee positions. White men are the primary beneficiaries of postsecondary institutions’ leadership positions, apart from historically Black institutions and some minority-serving institutions (Patton, 2016). But for Black women, the highest faculty rank awarded by a university is the title of full professor; a few exceptions include the rank of an endowed chair, distinguished professor, or university professor (Chambers & Freeman, 2020). Although many Blacks are in faculty positions, few of them advance into these prestigious positions (Chambers & Freeman, 2020). Based on a study of PhD holders, 68,560 were White males, 35,380 were White women, 5,437 were Black men, and 3,943 were Black women (Ginther & Kahn, 2015). Thus, for every 100 White women in a particular faculty position, there were only 10 Black women that held that same position (National Research Council, 2013).

This research will build on the data available associated with the voices of Black women.

The perfunctory presence of Black women in higher education reflects the status of their department ensuring that within it, Black women hold an isolative presence. Though qualitative literature exists on the experiences Black women face at PWIs, few studies have looked at these experiences through the intersectional lenses of both race and gender.

### **Evolution of BWF at PWIs**

#### **History**

Individuals of African descent represent a unique group who hold a differentiated place in history throughout the world and particularly the United States because of slavery and its effects (Harley, 2008). When compared to Whites, Blacks are less likely to have a college degree, more likely to live in low-income households, more likely to have Medicaid as their primary source of healthcare, less likely to live in a neighborhood that encompassed most of their race, and more likely to live in the Southern parts of the United States (Assari, 2017; Bailey et al., 2017). Despite instances where some Blacks had a higher household income and a college degree, these did not serve as protective factors against discrimination. The prevalence of racial discrimination is demonstrated by an increase of cases of racial profiling, Blacks and/or their family members being wrongfully accused and mistreated or being targeted more by police officers (Bleich et al., 2019). Further, interlocking systems of domination and oppression are present, with the systems of oppression, class, gender, race, and sexual orientation being interdependent (Ellis, 2001; Williams, 2001).

For many centuries, Blacks have been discriminated against in many ways, especially in terms of the labor force, but this is particularly true for Black women. Inequalities levied on Black women in the labor force have been culturally transmitted for generations. Historically, institutional racism has been inflicted on Black women physically, psychologically,

occupationally, and economically as a means of maintaining the status quo (Carter et al., 1996). Traditional roles that were determined for Black women included primarily housekeepers, cooks, and nannies for the households of White families (Walser-Smith, 2019). Thus, Black women have endured the double oppression of racism and sexism due to the treatment from men as well as White women (Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Walser-Smith, 2019).

In regard to Black women in academia, they differ in experiences, backgrounds, and beliefs; however, they are connected in their struggle to be accepted and have a voice at institutions due to the impact of racism and sexism (Collins, 2001; Harley, 2008). Black women's involvement in education began during slavery and as formal educators around the 1850s. These women entered the academy (i.e., institutions for Blacks) as heads of specialized nurse training schools and as deans of women (Harley, 2008; Wolfman, 1997). At PWIs, Black workers labored in service-related occupations. But the Civil Rights and Black Power movements created new employment opportunities for Black scholars at PWIs (Harley, 2008; Weems, 2003). Though PWIs used the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling to deny Blacks admittance into their institutions and refused to hire Black faculty (Fleming et al., 1978), this was overturned in 1954, which encouraged more Blacks to pursue educational degrees on all levels (Carter-Sowell & Zimmerman, 2015). Nonetheless, this did not amend the racist sentiments harbored by White students, administrators, and faculty. Barriers for Black women have continued to be inescapable. Despite the increasing number of Blacks teaching regularly in White institutions (200 in 1958 to 300 in 1961; Menges & Exum, 1983), Black women's marginalization in academia remained until landmark desegregation moved to dismantle overt forms of racism in American colleges and universities.

It was not until the 1973 court decision of *Adams v. Richardson*, which mandated an

increase in minority faculty at public institutions, that noticeable numbers of minority faculty were hired at PWIs, which stimulated women's greater participation in the workforce (Johnson & Scafide, 2020). But between 1975 and 1984, the percentage of BWF in academia declined from 4.6% to 3.6% (Cross, 1997). This is mostly due to the nullification of affirmative action initiatives during the Reagan administration during the 1980s, which led to less recruitment of Black students and a subsequent lack of BWF. Fast forward to the 21st century, statistics show that women teachers accounted for more than 76% in the 2015–2016 school year, with increased employability rates being in pre-kindergarten for Black women (Wong, 2019). In 2015, most Black females were employed as either pre-school or kindergarten teachers, and most Black men worked as carpenters (Yau, n.d.). Though Black women surpassed Black men in obtaining PhD degrees, this was not representative of the academic appointments to tenure (Blum, 2007). Full-time BWF have represented only 1.3% (NCES, 1998). In most cases, Black women veer off the path leading to a senior academic position due to the barriers previously mentioned (Menges & Exum, 1983).

Another issue contributing to the lack of Black women in academic is the wage gap. Black women earned a higher share of bachelor's degrees in psychology and social sciences than in any other broad science and engineering field, and the educational attainment of women ages 25 to 64 in the workforce has risen substantially over the past half-century (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). However, the base pay for female teachers remains 96% of the pay received by male teachers (Startz, 2019). Even if extra pay received above the base level is included, women still earned 93% less of what men earned (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020; Startz, 2019). Although the gender gap has not yet been fully eliminated, it is smaller for primary and secondary education teachers than in most economies.

Regardless of the level of the wage gap for secondary education, many Black women at PWIs are overwhelmingly recipients of deprivileged consequences (Jones, 2007; Montgomery, 2019). Images of Black women are externally defined by Whites, who are either unaware, unwilling, or unable to recognize the extent of racism and sexism in the university climate, categorization, and ghettoization of intellectual value (e.g., they can teach diversity courses but not research), marginalization, and arrogance in the academic setting (Collins, 2000; Harley, 2008). In general, Black faculty must cope with cultural insensitivity and ignorance from students, colleagues, administrators, and staff in the academic setting (Thompson & Louque, 2005).

### **Climate**

For many years, PWIs have been difficult spaces for Black female doctoral students to navigate, with one reason being race (Henderson, 2019; Henderson et al., 2010; Turner, 2002). Further, BWF and administrators experience hostile climates, lack of community, lack of mentorship in the scholarship and role models of success, and bias in performance evaluations (Thompson, 2008; Turner, 2002). Faculty of color have perceived the climate on their campuses as racist and had little faith that the administration was either committed to diversity or success (Iverson, 2007). The environment many BWF report feeling at a PWI is referred to as a “chilly climate” (Crayton, 2019), which is defined as a negative work environment, being treated with little or no respect, being overlooked for tenure and promotion, and being burdened with a higher threshold of accountability (Crayton, 2019; Turner & Myers, 2000). BWF also struggle to feel a sense of belonging at PWIs, stemming from the campus climate and a lack of diverse faculty and staff (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). They are neglected, their colleagues undermine their opinions and efforts, and they are often burdened with responsibilities, limiting their opportunities to focus on

their research (Parker, 2017). Moreover, despite the roles assigned to them by the institutions, they are often ignored for tenure review (Aguire, 2000). PWIs often treat Black faculty, and students, as objects—as if their thoughts, words, contributions, and conceptions are not valuable (Martin et al., 2019). The bullying and underrepresentation of Black faculty, especially at PWIs, also leaves other historically disadvantaged groups without advocates, allies, and colleagues to help mitigate the struggle (Hollis, 2017; Leggon, 2006). Consequently, social exclusion patterns in academic settings often lead Black women to struggle in silence, change institutions, or leave higher education (Allan, 2019).

Further, three critical obstacles to being a successful minority faculty at PWIs include learning to fit into the climate at the department level, enduring and surviving the way the majority group behaves on campus toward minority faculty at the university level, and working to acquire the specific job skills needed as a faculty member (Beachum, 2015; Stanley, 2006; Whitefield-Harris et al., 2017). For many Black women, accepting a faculty position at a PWI means having a job description that is distinctly different from that of their White colleagues (Graves, 1990; Pittman, 2012). In some instances, a Black woman is expected to participate on committees that address minority issues, serve as a mentor to students of color, and may even be called on to participate in programs aimed specifically at mentoring Black female students. Although it could be argued that these are not exclusive to BWF, because of their perceived status as “two-for-one” (a person who is a member of two minority groups), they are afforded more of these opportunities than their Black and White male or female colleagues (Pittman, 2012; Proctor & Davis, 1994).

Additionally, Black women are not incorporated into the mainstream of the academic culture at PWIs and receive fewer collaborative research opportunities than other female faculty

(Alfred, 2001; Turner, 2002; Turner & Myers, 2000). BWF often observe that when they voice their opinions about issues, they are labeled as troublemakers, a special interest group, or as crying wolf. BWF all experience common barriers such as isolation, tokenism, lack of professional respect, occupational stress, and institutional racism across all institutional types (Johnson & Scafide, 2020).

### **Barriers Affecting BWF**

Diversity in higher education, mentorship, and racism/sexism are three key areas affecting women of color in higher education (Zeligman et al., 2015). Specifically in counselor education, women of color have expressed their experiences regarding support, sacrifices/challenges, setting an example, racial/cultural awareness, diversity, and the program's journey. More universities could improve the experiences of women of color by working toward diverse recruitment efforts, which could also help alleviate the pressure felt by those hoping to set an example for other women of color.

Higher education still represents the complex relations between race, property, and oppression. Despite growth and change in U.S. demographics, higher education is considered a White terrain in terms of physical representation of White students and symbolically in terms of curriculum, campus policies, and campus spaces (Patton, 2016). The demographic conformation of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professions reveals property rights in having privileges associated with belonging to the majority, particularly the right to exclude. Women are often overlooked for leadership positions in academia due to their duality. Furthermore, their contributions are often ignored. Black women experience isolation and exclusion caused by a lack of access to women's peers, role models, and mentors (Perna et al., 2007). Women in academia are also burdened with dispelling the myths associated with their

ability to be present and effective leaders in education while balancing home-life responsibilities (Toffoletti & Star, 2016). This is an example of how de facto segregation exists in academia (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2010). Gentrification allows more White, affluent, educated people to encroach on and displace low-income/racially marginalized communities, shifting everything from racial demographics, education, and housing options (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2010).

The subsequent section will identify the most prominent barriers and challenges for BWF at PWIs identified throughout the literature. These 10 barriers include racism, sexism, the intersectionality of race and gender (Zeligman et al., 2015), microaggressions, stereotype threat, the glass ceiling and glass cliff, disinterest in research topics, limited opportunities to hold leadership roles, and isolation due to the absence of role models and mentors (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2010; Perna et al., 2007).

## **Explicit Discrimination**

### ***Racism***

Racism continues to adversely affect millions of people of color and specifically Black women (Feagin & Sikes, 1994, as cited in Louis et al., 2016). Black women have had to withstand the fear and stress related to racist behaviors from members of other cultures (Jones, 1997). As individuals, Black women have been rejected by members of other cultures, discriminated against, wrongly judged, and sometimes even harmed (Bobo et al., 1997). As sisters, wives, and mothers of Black men, Black women experience an anxiety only shared by others who can relate to being a Black woman. Stress has increased as Black women have remained silent out of fear; repercussions for speaking out against White Americans regarding personal injustices continue to result in negative outcomes or no change at all (Bobo, 2017).

Research has also indicated that if women perceived acts of discrimination as negative (either ethnic or engender discrimination) and attributed importance to the acts, more stress was experienced; stress was not experienced when acts were perceived as only sexist, possibly as the women did not perceive sexist experiences as separate from racism (King, 2006). This suggests that sexist experiences might be so intertwined that it is impossible or irrelevant to separate anxiety from racism. Thus, gendered racism is a construct experienced separately from racism and sexism, and stress is associated with this unique experience.

### *Sexism*

Women of color deal with racism and sexism. Much like racism, sexism is an attitude, which leads to sexual harassment and sometimes sexual assault (Shields, 2008). Black women have reported a wide variation of oppressive experiences, including discrimination, harassment, and being disrespected in the workplace, primarily in educational settings (Essed, 1991). Compared to the total number of Black women working in higher education, there have been relatively few who reported not experiencing sexism in the workplace. Most Black women reported high discrimination while working in male-dominated professions (Perna et al., 2007). Their contributions were often ignored, and they experienced isolation caused by a lack of access to female peers, role models, and mentors (Perna et al., 2007). Black women have also reported being distressed from exposure to negative media images, patronizing attitudes from others, rudeness, oppressive jokes, talk, and harassment including “petty” harassment (e.g., being picked on, lied about, having complaints made against them) and sexual harassment. This gendered racism suggests that Black women are subject to unique forms of oppression due to their simultaneous “Blackness” and “femaleness.” For some Black women, experiences of being both a woman and identifying as Black cannot be easily separated, so they may perceive

discrimination due to identifying as a Black woman.

**The Intersectionality of Race and Gender.** Race intersects with gender, sexual identity, social class, language, and even ability (Capper, 2015). However, it is difficult to separate race from gender related to Black women (Lewis et al., 2017). Black women appear to identify as being a Black woman more intimately than they do as being Black or as a woman, independent of each other (Lewis et al., 2017). This may be due to the struggles they have faced historically as members of two minority groups: being female and being Black. They have been given the least number of rights and are potential victims of sexism and racism (Broussard, 2013).

Although women in general experience sexism and harassment, the confluence of racist attitudes can lead to a different and perhaps more harmful form of sexism for Black women (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Black women must deal with this concept of gendered racism, which brings about additional stress from heavier workloads, and a surplus of service-oriented roles (Constantine et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2015). Gendered racism is a unique form of oppression experienced by women of color due to their position at the intersection of race and gender (Perry et al., 2013). Gendered racism occurs from perceptions, stereotypes, or images of specific groups. However, the experience of gendered racism has not received much attention in the literature, as most research captures racism and sexism separately, missing the uniquely blended phenomenon in gendered racism (Perry et al., 2013).

Black women are subject to gender differences in racial discrimination experiences, and racial differences in gender experiences (De Welde et al., 2016). Black women have reported dealing with pervasive stereotypes, including the expectation to appease and serve others, Black women's inferiority, and sexual promiscuity, though it was challenging to distinguish whether prejudice was due to their race, sex, or a combination (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). For

example, Black women are subjected to unique, aggression-based, and exclusion-based discriminatory behaviors by their women counterparts within the academic setting (Perna et al., 2007; Umbach, 2007). Additionally, although Black women have made and continue to attain higher status positions, the majority are still forced into more menial, poorer paying jobs. This speaks to the disparity that Black women continue to be held back by gender and race (Starz, 2019; Yau, n.d.).

The intersectionality of race and gender is substantiated in the deficit of Black women in academia. Though most of the literature on women faculty has focused on gender (particularly White women) or race (with an emphasis on men of color) versus a both/and approach (Kelly & Winkle-Wagner, 2017), research has indicated that the structural and cultural dynamisms that adversely impact Black women academics include lack of mentorship, disproportionate service responsibility, marginalized work, and challenges related to balancing work and personal responsibilities (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). Women scholars of color, working as others within interlocking discourses of oppression, face significant challenges in attempting social change beyond the institution (Williams, 2001).

## **Implicit Discrimination**

### ***Microaggressions***

Microaggressions are subtle slights and insults that targets of bias face, which often occur without the perpetrator's awareness (Poteat & Spanierman, 2012). Racial discrimination has typically been viewed as overt, making it easy to dismiss microaggressions as other causes and causing the victims to question their reactions while the perpetrator dismisses accusations of racism (Nnawulezi & Sullivan, 2014). Whether direct or indirect, microaggressions can serve as barriers to Black female graduate students and can have a profound impact on their graduate

student experience (Cropps, 2018). Many Black faculty members also experience racism, either subtle or overt (Ross & Edwards, 2016). The most experienced forms of racism have included lack of mentorship, discrimination in the classroom, and lack of respect overall (Cole, 2001).

### ***Stereotype Threat***

Race and gender stereotypes can create double obstacles for Black women in leadership roles, who are called on to serve as “the diversity expert” for campus matters as well as attend to both the academic and personal needs of all students of color within their departments and/or on campus (Griffin & Reddick, 2011; Marina & Ross, 2016; Moses, 1989). Additionally, low-status groups (e.g., women and racial minorities) are generally associated with “warm” attributes such as kindness and helpfulness (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fiske et al., 2002). As such, racial minority leaders might be perceived as having the appropriate traits to lead during times of crisis (Kulich et al., 2014). However, though stereotypes about Black women have depicted images that were stoic and self-relying, these perceptions could overshadow the true hardships and challenges that Black women face (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Donovan, 2011; Henderson, 2019).

Stereotypes also frequently manifest in acts of prejudice and discrimination within the academic setting (Dade et al., 2015). The use of this type of discrimination ignited a lack of respect from students (Montgomery, 2019). It is common for Black faculty to be challenged by their Caucasian students at a rate much higher than Caucasian faculty members (Allison, 2008). Caucasian students have viewed Black faculty as less knowledgeable in their subject area than Caucasian professors (Bright, 2020). Research indicates that Black faculty at PWIs often encounter isolation, token roles, biased promotion and tenure processes, and other forms of discrimination attributed to the existence of stereotypes (Frazier, 2011).

In line with encounters of stereotypes, Black women also face issues contesting

stereotype threats, which are worries about confirming negative stereotypes about their ingroup's ability through their performance in a stereotyped domain (Rydell et al., 2014; Steele et al., 2002). Stereotype threat is associated with decreased performance and performance expectations as well as lower motivation and maladaptive career goal attainment beliefs (Deemer et al., 2016). If exposed to a stereotype long enough, those who are stigmatized may begin to question whether the stereotype is legitimate, increasing their doubts about their competence (Casad et al., 2017; Deemer et al., 2016). From a sociocultural perspective, environments dominated by males can elicit stigma and stereotype threat, which can lower women's sense of belonging, increase feelings of exclusion and isolation, and lead to disengagement from the domain (Beasley & Fischer, 2012; Casad et al., 2017). Experiencing stereotype threat leads individuals to avoid domains in which they are stereotyped as not belonging, such as women in leadership (Casad & Bryant, 2016), especially when these women are one of the few members belonging to their racial group (Hoyt et al., 2010). As leaders are commonly assumed to be White males, Black women seeking leadership positions must directly challenge that stereotype (Koenig et al., 2011).

### ***The Glass Ceiling, Glass Cliff, and Concrete Wall***

The glass ceiling is a metaphor used to represent an invisible barrier that has historically prevented minorities, specifically Black women, from advancing to higher positions (De Welde et al., 2016). The glass ceiling effect of Black underrepresentation in influential positions of leadership is also salient within higher education (McGee, 2017). Black women who can break through the glass ceiling are placed on a glass cliff, being expected to lead during periods of organizational instability (Ryan et al., 2016). Black women are also more likely than men to be overlooked for advancement opportunities, even when they exhibit noteworthy work.

Although the glass ceiling depicts the barriers and challenges of women, a concrete wall

signifies the barriers faced exclusively by Black women (Pierre, 2019). The unyielding structure of a concrete wall permits few women of color to break through it. The concrete wall phenomenon is also referred to as the “Black ceiling” (Catalyst, 1999; Sepand, 2015). These three phenomena are the challenges faced by Black women, most prevalently in higher education.

### **Barriers to Advancement**

Though Black women have been able to enter education as teachers at the elementary and secondary levels, professorships in academia are still limited (Asare, 2019; Hull et al., 1982). The tenure process has also not been inclusive of Black women due to historical discrimination, the lack of role models in similar roles, the stress of balancing roles as a professional and a caregiver, the prevalence of microaggressions, and being made to feel undeserving of the position (Allison, 2008; Asare, 2019). Further, BWF’s research is not always supported or valued, especially when it relates to Black epistemology (Moses, 1998; Paul, 2001; Perna et al., 2007). Research carried out by BWF is devalued or ignored if the subject deals with minority concerns (Turner & Myers, 2000), and research carried out from a Black perspective may not be regarded as credible enough to grant scholarship, restricting their chance of availing tenure in PWIs (Parker, 2017; Turner & Myers, 2000).

Research also indicates the lack of support systems and networks and unwelcome, insensitive, and isolative environments as impediments to Black women’s academic success (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Lack of teaching and research support and mentoring have surfaced as a complexity Black women navigate in navigated PWIs (Kelly & Winkle-Wagner, 2017). A lack of representation results in fewer role models for women of color and limited peer support from those with a shared experience. However, recruitment and retention of diverse faculty should be

a fundamental goal for higher education institutions because there is value in learning environments incorporating diverse perspectives, knowledge, and points of view. Though the number of Black faculty recruited to PWIs has slightly increased (Modica & Mamaseishvili, 2010), they are still primarily underrepresented compared to White faculty at these institutions (Kelly et al., 2017).

### **Current Trends of BWF at PWIs**

As difficult as Black scholars have found it to enroll and graduate from PWIs, it has been even more difficult to gain access to permanent faculty appointments. Before 1990, only nine Black faculty were hired to teach at White colleges, and only one of them was female (Dorsey, 2002). Within this context lies a constant struggle for Black women in higher education to prove that they are just as competent as faculty as their White male colleagues (Myers, 2002). White male faculty are institutional gatekeepers, controlling access by determining who is qualified, which not only maintains status quo but creates a hostile work environment for Black faculty (Moore, 1988, p. 118).

Gender gaps in hiring and promotions are also still an issue in the workplace, resulting in the contributions of women being overlooked (Wong, 2019; Yau; n.d.). Instead of prestigious leadership opportunities that could be beneficial to a tenure dossier, Black faculty members are often solicited for service to the campus community that may not be a good use of time, posing a distraction from their teaching and research (Pittman, 2012). BWF are often stretched beyond capacity to serve on committees addressing minority and Black specific issues in addition to the number of courses they teach and the many students they advise. Thus, they are expected to do more than is required of White male faculty while excelling in their research projects (Fields, 2020; Howard-Baptiste & Harris, 2014). Often these expectations are a source of contention as

Black faculty members have been found to place a higher value on teaching and service than White faculty due to their burdened experiences in academia (Donovan, 2011).

The inability to secure tenure has been the most significant factor contributing to the slow increases and the occasional decreases of Black faculty at PWIs (Crayton, 2019; Jayakumar et al., 2009). For faculty members from marginalized groups, tenure remains merit-based, defined by measures that are often ambiguous and difficult to achieve without proper guidance and consideration of biases in the process (Griffin et al., 2013; Fields, 2020; Pittman, 2012). Though the process is not always transparent, this does not imply there is no minority representation in these groups. Still, due to the low representation of minorities, there will inevitably be more dominant group members deciding who is and is not extended offers of tenure and promotion (Fields, 2020). Educational access has been granted to women and people of color for years, but the faculty realm remains dominated by White men (Frazier, 2011).

Another part of BWF teaching in PWIs is teaching White students versus Black students. The research on courses taught by Black female faculty at PWIs shows that when they can teach courses that they want to teach, retention is high (Siegel et al., 2015). When these same faculty members teach courses that contain Black graduate students, they serve as mentors, and they are expected to be empathetic, trusting, and approachable to the students (Tuitt, 2012). But when Black female faculty at PWIs teach White students, they are often questioned and disrespected (Bonner et al., 2014). These system-level factors show what the experiences are like for Black faculty.

### **Experiences of BWF**

Some of the experiences of BWF at PWIs are intercultural occurrences between individuals of different backgrounds who interact, ignore, communicate, and co-exist in the same

space creating some type of consequence (Deardorff, 2009). For example, the Black culture that BWF bring with them to the university setting is often ignored or marginalized by the dominant White culture at the university (Beachum, 2015). Black women and other minoritized women at PWIs have noted that their race or ethnicity can be recognized more often than their qualifications and credentials (Cole, 2001; Davis & Fry, 2019). For example, they may be introduced as a faculty of color without reference to their qualifications (Turner & Myers, 2000). Black female faculty also often believe that they do not belong at the academic institution because of systemic issues that make the climate and atmosphere unwelcoming. Similarly, their scholarly work is often not recognized for its true value (Tuitt, 2012). Black faculty face institutional racism in their jobs, making it difficult for them to navigate the tenure process (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Taylor, 2018).

Though universities, colleges, and departments create an atmosphere that promotes the visibility of BWF, even when there are small numbers, Black women face pressure to be the person of color in the room and to handle all minority issues in the department (Beachum, 2015). Black female faculty members tend to take on more advising, mentoring, and service-oriented roles for underrepresented students while serving on committees that address minority issues and diversity initiatives on their respective campuses (Louis et al., 2016). They sometimes feel they are being watched and must work harder than their White counterparts to accomplish the same goals (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Turner & Myers, 2000). This feeling is magnified when there are only a few minority faculty members or if the person is considered the token person of color at the university, college, or department (Turner & Myers, 2000).

Racism and sexism further contribute to the unique experience of being a woman of color within higher education (Zeligman et al., 2015). Even when Black female faculty have been

successful at PWIs, they remain imperiled to receive negative comments from their White colleagues (Frazier, 2011), and they have expressed that they must assimilate into the dominant culture and follow the rules to survive (Bonner et al., 2014). Certain situations have found that Black female faculty members choose to conform to the majority's rules because their perceived injustices have been excused by White administrators (Taylor, 2018). In one case, when a White administrator who had been supportive of a Black faculty member resigned, another White faculty member suggested that the faculty member could survive without "her master" (Bonner et al., 2014). In another case, a Black female faculty member was regularly challenged by White students, who were then defended by a White faculty member, regarding the subject matter she was teaching and the syllabus contents (Bonner et al., 2014). These occurrences cause some BWF to feel like they must constantly prove themselves (Beachum, 2015).

### **The Role of Mentorship**

Mentorship has been cited as one of the key factors in successful graduate and faculty careers by scholars. Mentorship has been defined as "a process by which persons of superior rank, special achievement and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés" (De Welde et al., 2016, p. 56). Mentoring is about creating an enduring and meaningful relationship with another person, focusing on the quality of that relationship (Salinitri, 2005). This includes factors such as mutual respect, willingness to learn from each other, and the use of interpersonal skills (Salinitri, 2005).

### **Negative Impact from Lack of BWF Mentorship**

The lack of support systems and networks and unwelcomed, insensitive, isolative environments are impediments to Black women's success in academia (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Most of the time, these professors reported being the only Black person within their department

and the only person of color in their department or colleges (Park, 2017). Research suggests mentoring as an effective strategy to counteract this problem for Black women working at PWIs, including educational leadership programs (Grant & Ghee, 2015; Kelly & Winkle-Wagner, 2017). But a lack of representation results in fewer role models for women of color and limited peer support from those with a shared experience. A few reasons for the lack of Black women in full-time positions include historical discrimination, the lack of role models in similar roles, the stress of balancing roles as a professional and caregiver, the prevalence of microaggressions, and being made to feel undeserving of the position (Gardner et al., 2014). Without mentors who resemble themselves and/or their struggles, BWF find it difficult to speak to other colleagues regarding experiences of racism, sexism, privilege, and inequity, because the privilege belonging to those who identify as White, or as a male, becomes the lens through which these experiences are re-interpreted and dismissed (De Welde et al., 2016). Black female professors have told stories of isolation, betrayal, nitpicking, and triviality, and lack of or minimal mentorship at PWIs (Park, 2017).

Though mentorship is critical in helping graduate students persist in and complete their studies, the underrepresentation of faculty of color and women in higher education greatly reduces the opportunities for graduate students from these same groups to find mentors of their race, ethnicity, or gender (De Welde et al., 2016). In 1991, studies reported that the retention rate for Black students who attended PWIs was steadily decreasing (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005). Although Black students enroll at PWIs at a slightly higher number, their retention and graduation rates remain consistently low (Schmader, Major & Granzow, 2002). Lack of mentoring is one of the major reasons colleges and universities have had difficulty retaining Black students (Davis et al., 2011). A study of Black women undergraduate students indicated

the importance of mentor-like figures such as family, friends, and a few on campus staff who provided encouragement, positivity, communication, trust, faith, reassurance, patience, and understanding (Thomas, 2018). BWF can thus profoundly impact the lives and perceptions of college students (Gregory, 2001). The mere presence of Black faculty on campus provides an incentive to Black students that they can complete their degree requirements while contributing to their community.

Students of color are not the only ones affected by the absence of BWF. A limited number of BWF at PWIs could also have a detrimental impact on White students, faculty, and staff (Bates, 2007; Gregory, 2001; Vargas, 2003). The absence or small participation of Black women could send the message that Black women are not qualified to be scholars, professors, administrators, or even doctoral students. This myth places women in a position to constantly defend their authenticity as scholars and causes their aptitude for success in academia to become more challenging (Bates, 2007; Gregory, 2001; Vargas, 2003).

Creating appropriate mentoring relationships for women of color can be challenging since limited racial diversity exists on college campuses (Gasman et al., 2011). There is also limited research on the different journeys and experiences women of color have in higher education. It is important to explore the journeys of Black women in higher education because of the many factors that contribute to their underrepresentation in higher education (Zeligman et al., 2015). The number of BWF at PWIs is increasing; however, an understanding of the factors related to their academic success at these institutions is underdeveloped (Bailey-Fakhoury & Frierson, 2014). This study is relevant to the research, as it builds on the findings to examine what contributes to the lack of BWF at PWIs.

### **Positive Impact of BWF Mentorship**

With BWF, mentorship is critical in helping many attain and succeed in their academic careers. Mentoring for women in academia contributes to professional success and career advancement (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Having strong faculty networks encompassing social and professional support is highly correlated to BWF (McConner, 2014; Robinson, 2018; Wiecek & Hamilton, 2013). Black women working in academia use their professional support systems to exchange ideas, discuss research interests and needs, and provide mutual support. These dialogues offer Black women an opportunity to be vocal and increase their self-confidence while providing resources to help combat obstacles within the academic setting. Additionally, mentoring with other BWF is emotionally healthy and creates cultural sensitivity (McConner, 2014). Black faculty with similar interests also form research and publication teams with senior faculty mentors (Tilman, 2001). Further, senior faculty of the same racial background are more equipped to respond to departmental and institutional politics, possess professional networks, and can provide emotional support; they can relate to the stresses associated with being a woman of color in academia (McConner, 2014; Robinson, 2018). Mentoring is a way to support faculty and preclude the social isolation of BWF and administrators. Mentoring positively impacts job satisfaction, lowers attrition, and facilitates obtaining career advice, public praise of accomplishments, a confidant, and career progression (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Jenkins, 2005; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). Yet, for Black women, access to and quality of mentoring remains an issue, particularly for women on the tenure track (Edwards et al., 2011).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, an extensive review of the literature was presented that supported the need for this study. This chapter was organized into six sections that discussed the statistics of

BWF, the evolution of BWF at PWIs, barriers and challenges experienced by BWF at PWIs, current trends of BWF at PWIs, experiences of BWF at PWIs, and the impact of mentorship on the retention of Black female faculty. The method used to conduct the study, including the research strategy and plan, methods of data collection, and strategies to enhance trustworthiness, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHOD**

In this chapter, I present the research methodology for this qualitative, phenomenological study regarding the shared experiences of BWF in counselor education programs at PWIs. This chapter includes the research purpose, the research questions, the research design, the participants, the procedures, and the data analyses. Finally, I provide verification procedures and ethical considerations.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the recruitment and retention experiences of BWF in counselor education and supervision programs at PWIs. The goal was to gain an understanding of the factors that impacted BWF in their decision to accept a position and to remain employed in a counselor education program at a PWI. By identifying the central themes that emerged from BWFs' narratives, institutions and departments will have a greater ability to recruit and retain BWF.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What influenced Black women counselor educators to accept faculty positions in a counselor education programs at a PWI?
2. What factors promoted the retention of Black female faculty currently employed in a counselor education program at a PWI?

### **Research Design**

This study used a phenomenological approach to examine the shared experiences of BWF in counselor education at PWIs. Phenomenology is used to identify phenomena, focus on subjective experiences, and understand the structure of those lived experiences through the

unique perspective of each participant (Haskins et al., 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological inquiry is used to provide a rich understanding and meaning of everyday experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). For this study, the phenomenon studied were the shared experiences of BWF teaching in counselor education programs at PWIs.

Although phenomenology was the chosen methodology for this study because it is useful for studying lived experiences, it is essential to discuss the features of other qualitative methods and why they were not chosen for this study. The focus of grounded theory is to generate ideas with the goal of theory development (Patton, 2016). However, that was not applicable to this study, as I was not seeking to develop a theory to explain the experiences of BWF (Hayes & Wood, 2011). I chose not to conduct a case study, as I examined the experiences of multiple individuals. Lastly, ethnography was not chosen, as I did not seek to study the culture of Black women. Although these theories all share some similarities, the extensive and robust information revealed is interpreted differently. Due to the explanatory nature of the research questions, a thematic analysis qualitative research design was used to conduct this study (Creswell, 2005; Gardner et al., 2014).

### **Selection of Participants**

The target population for this study consisted of 23 Black women core faculty teaching full-time in a counselor education program at a PWI. This number exceeds the range and guidelines set forth for qualitative phenomenological research designs (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, I set the maximum number of final participants at 10. Institutional review board (IRB) approval was obtained on July 9, 2021 (approval # IRB-FY20-21-970), prior to sending the recruitment letter to potential participants via email, along with permission to record and publish the findings prior to contacting any participant.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In this phenomenological study, I was the human instrument through which the data were collected and analyzed (Moustakas, 1994). As the human instrument, it is important to identify my role in the research and any potential bias that could have manifested in data collection and analysis (Corbin et al., 2015). I am a Black woman in a counselor education doctoral program at a PWI. Thus, I knew that there was the potential that I would identify with the participants in my study. Bracketing is the process by which researchers discuss all preconceptions, previous knowledge, and experience related to the topic in question before collecting and analyzing the data to not interfere with or influence the participants' experience (Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). As the sole researcher conducting this study, I was intentional about bracketing before data collection to decrease the likelihood of my biases surfacing through. I remained aware of my own thoughts, feelings, and assumptions as to not impose my experiences on participants.

### **Research Procedures**

The data for this study were collected after receiving approval from Liberty University's IRB. To collect the data, I utilized 45- to 60-minute semistructured individual interviews, along with the option for a 60- to 90-minute focus group, followed by a member check to review the accuracy of my descriptions and interpretations (Birt et al., 2016). The questions that guided the interviews or were open-ended questions, which allowed the participants to openly share about their experiences (see Appendix A). A participant questionnaire was also administered to obtain demographic information and information regarding participant leadership experiences. The participant questionnaire is included in Appendix C. Each individual interview was transcribed

using a transcription software. To verify the accuracy of the transcription, I read through each transcript while listening to the recorded interview.

### **Preparing to Collect Data**

I initially brainstormed a list of potential interview questions that would help to draw out the experience of the participants, which I gave to my committee to review. After considering committee suggestions, I was able to narrow the focus and direction of the questions. After committee review, 20 questions were determined, divided among three sections (see Appendix A).

After gaining IRB approval, I sent out a recruitment letter that invited Black female faculty teaching in a counselor education program at a single PWI to participate in the study (see Appendix B). The informed consent form and the screening questionnaire was attached to the initial email for potential participants to review (see Appendix C). Potential participants were asked to return the completed questionnaire if they interested in participating in the study. Once this was received, I scheduled the interviews based on their availability. The signed consent forms were returned to me prior to our scheduled interview time. Each interview was conducted using Zoom, a video-telephony service with audio recording. I guided the interviews using open-ended questions, asking clarifying or follow-up questions as needed.

Interviews were transcribed using a secure, transcribing software. All audio-recorded data and verbatim transcripts were stored using a password-secured computer. I emailed the transcript to each participant so they could check the accuracy of their transcription. Participants were also asked to revise or remove any content that they did not want to be added to the study. After the participants approved the final verbatim transcription, I began the data analysis as outlined in the next section.

## **Process of Thematic Analysis**

I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-phase approach of thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report. The following sections detail each step followed for thematic analysis.

### **Step 1: Become Familiar with the Data**

The first step in Braun and Clarke's (2006) analysis required me to familiarize myself with the data. In this stage, I spent time reading and re-reading the data before I began coding to become familiar with the content.

### **Step 2: Generate Initial Codes**

The second step required that I begin coding each participant's data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I reviewed and identified features of the data that were relevant to answering each of my research questions.

### **Step 3: Search for Themes**

In Braun and Clarke's (2006) third step, I examined each code to place them into potential themes. Themes are broader categories of significance into which codes fit (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). To create themes, I grouped shared phrases or words into categories to form specific themes related to the research question guiding the study (Moustakas, 1994). Data were continuously reviewed so that the emergence of themes and the connection among shared experiences were constantly be made.

### **Step 4: Reviewing Themes**

Step 4 of Braun and Clarke (2006) is when began reviewing themes. During this step, I revised, refined, and reviewed the initial themes against the dataset. I then re-read the complete

dataset to determine if the themes comprehensively represented the data. Additional data were coded within the established themes as they became applicable.

### **Step 5: Define and Name the Themes**

In this step, I defined and named each theme while refining the focus of each theme. A portion of the verbatim narratives were included within the respective themes. I also provided the scope of each theme, a detailed analysis of each theme, along with a general indication of what story was being told by that theme. Prior to moving on to Step 6, I examined each individual theme to assure there was minimal overlap of themes and clear definition.

### **Step 6: Write Up Findings**

Lastly, I produced the report. This report tells the story of the data across all themes. To verify the accuracy of the thematic analysis, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) 15-point checklist. The themes are discussed in the next chapter.

### **Verification Procedures**

In qualitative research, there are four areas of trustworthiness (McLeod, 2011). Credibility was addressed by using critical self-reflection and bracketing. This was further addressed through using verbatim transcripts to create an accurate portrayal of participants' meaning and to help avoid inference. Transferability was addressed through a comprehensive and detailed explanation of the context of the study and the phenomena being investigated. Dependability and confirmability were addressed through member checking, which let the participants verify the transcriptions (Bowen, 2005).

### **Ethical Considerations**

I obtained a signed informed consent form from each participant (Appendix D) prior to beginning the interviews. The consent form included a detailed description of what the study

entailed along with instructions on how to respond if they wished to participate. The form also notified participants that their identities would remain protected. Because descriptions of experiences have the potential to reveal an individual's identity, participants were also informed that they may refuse to answer, revise, or remove any content that they felt would create any potential disclosure, discomfort, or other risk to them. I also repeated this during the interview and before member checking. With the intent to eliminate and reduce all possible risk to the participants, I adhered to all the guidelines set by the IRB. The data collected are used only for the purposes of this study. All data were password protected and accessible only by me. However, for data verification, each participant was given access to their recording via different accounts through password-protected file sharing, which was set up to maintain confidentiality and to protect the identity of each participant.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I reviewed the phenomenological methodology used to answer the research questions. This included participant selection, the data collection process, the role of the researcher, the 6-phase process of thematic analysis, and the process of establishing trustworthiness. In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed description of the analysis and themes that emerged.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

Chapter 4 provides a detailed exploration of the thematic analysis used to arrive at the themes and subthemes for the data. This chapter describes the focus of the research, the methodology, and the sample. It also provides an overview of the procedure and data analysis. Additionally, the themes, associated subthemes, and other items of interest will be provided with supporting verbatim quotations from the data.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge of the factors that impact the recruitment and retention of BWF members in a counselor education program at a PWI, based on their personal experiences. Given the current underrepresentation of BWF at PWIs, there is a need to examine the factors that would increase the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty. Prior research has mainly focused on aspects that supported the recruitment and retention of Black women doctoral students. But little research has been conducted in examining the factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of BWF. Understanding the factors that support the recruitment and retention of BWF at PWIs will provide valuable insight for counselor educators seeking to enhance recruitment and increase retention and advancement of BWF within their department.

### **Sample**

As discussed in Chapter 3, potential participants for this study consisted of 23 Black women who were core faculty teaching full-time in a counselor education program at a PWI. This was a purposefully selected sample. IRB approval was obtained on July 9, 2021, along with permission to record and publish the findings, before sending the recruitment letter and informed consent documents to potential participants via email. Out of the 23 potential participants, six

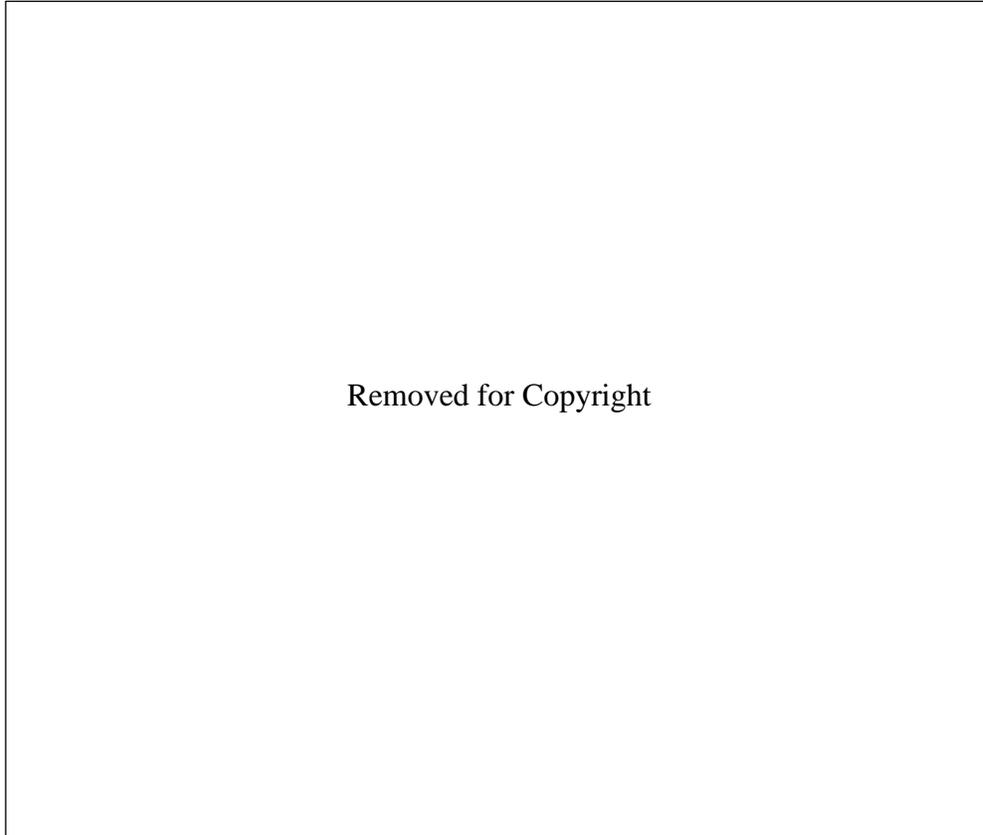
faculty members indicated their interest in participating in the study by returning the informed consent document. A follow-up email was sent to potential participants 1 week later; however, no additional faculty members responded to the invitation to participate in the study. After ensuring that they met the study criteria, I contacted the six participants to set up times for them to participate in either a video interview or a focus group. All six participants opted to participate in the individual interview.

### **Research Methodology**

Data for this study were gathered through individual interviews using Zoom video conferencing. All interviews were audiotaped, and the interviews were transcribed into verbatim transcripts using Otter.ai transcription software. To confirm the accuracy of the transcription, I listened to each audio recording of the individual interviews to clarify any content the software may have overlooked or transcribed incorrectly. The themes and subthemes were reviewed at least 12 times. During each review, more commonalities among the data emerged, allowing for the themes and subthemes to become more defined with each iteration. As the codes and data extracts were analyzed, I generated multiple thematic maps, which were reviewed and revised over time. After developing each theme and subtheme, a thorough review to establish accuracy was conducted, leading to a comprehensive thematic analysis of the data.

### **Data Analysis**

For data analysis, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis (see Figure 1). First, I immersed myself in the data. Next, I coded the individual data. Following this, I coded the potential themes and formulated an initial thematic map. I reviewed and revised the thematic map several times. Finally, I worked with my dissertation chair and another colleague to triangulate the data and generate a report.

**Figure 1***Six Phases of Thematic Data Analysis*

*Note.* From “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), p. 87. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

**Results****Research Question 1**

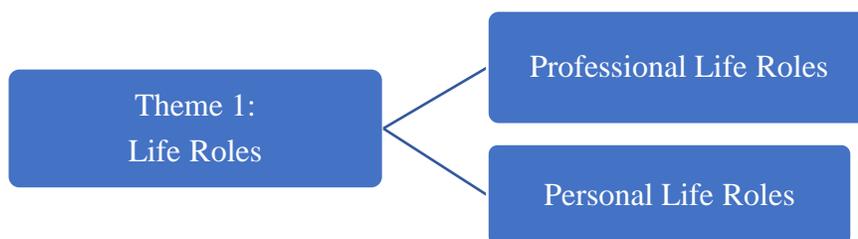
The first eight questions of the interview focused on the factors that influence the participants’ reasons for applying to and accepting a position at a PWI. Upon analysis, I found three themes, which were further broken down into subthemes where appropriate. The three major themes were life roles, relationships with current faculty, and intrinsic values. These themes and subthemes will be further discussed in the following sections. For this data set, there were no disconfirming data sets shown.

### ***Theme 1: Life Roles***

Participants reported various factors that impacted their decisions to apply and accept faculty positions in PWIs. Though their reasons were personal, participants described several factors that led them to accept faculty positions at a PWI. These factors ranged from the salary and benefits of the position, opportunities for professional advancement, and flexibility of the job providing participants with more time to spend with family. Figure 2 shows a thematic map for the subthemes of Theme 1.

**Figure 2**

*Thematic Map for Theme 1*



**Subtheme 1: Professional Life Roles.** Most of the participants reported that their main reason for taking a faculty position was the desire for full-time employment as a counselor educator. Ada indicated,

Really, it was about just having full time, a full-time faculty position Umm, not specifically the institution itself. Um, and in this at this current stage, it was the, it was having a full-time position so that I could be the change that that I wanted to see in our profession. And the only way to get into those bigger leadership positions is to be in a, in a full-time position as a counselor educator because a lot of those positions require you to currently be a full-time counselor educator. Yeah, I think that that was that was my biggest reason for me, seeking full time.

Some participants highlighted that the climate and structure of the institution was a significant influence on their decision. Because they considered the institutional and academic structure was well organized, they felt that this would free them up for engaging in other areas of professional development. According to Delilah, “At [current institution], it is very much structured in terms of how the class was to go. Everything is pretty much laid out and you spend more time engaging with students rather than prep for the course.”

**Subtheme 2: Personal Life Roles.** During the interviews, some participants discussed some benefits associated with being a faculty member. These benefits ranged from the pay that comes with the position to having more time to spend with family due to the flexibility associated with working remotely. Many of the participants highlighted the importance of family and how much they desired to be in positions that would offer an opportunity to bring balance to their personal and professional responsibilities. Betty discussed the professional–personal tension experienced between needing to be on campus every day versus her desire to be at home with her children, noting, “I really wanted something that was completely online and to have the flexibility to, to be at home with my younger children, and to kind of navigate around whatever their needs would be.” Ada also stated that being able to work remotely gave her the flexible work schedule she needed, given all she was currently going through in her personal life:

I did do some research and trying to find programs that had Black institutions that had clinical counseling, they did not really have online programs, and I wasn’t relocating on a gamble. And so, as for me, online teaching was just the best fit, because of the life I’m in right now

Further, Ada remarked,

One of the unique things about this particular program that made it enticing was that ... I'd be able to have student interaction as an assistant professor but did not have the obligation to be leaving my home and working in the evening, as most graduate school is in the evenings, and that was like another incentive.

***Theme 2: Trusted Relationships***

The encouragement of close colleagues and trusted faculty members of color greatly influenced participants' decisions to accept faculty positions at a PWI. According to Delilah, I don't think I was drawn, as opposed to being sought after. I had several faculty [members] at the university that I'm currently at, who asked me to apply. I don't think I ever really considered PWI or predominately Black and it was never a consideration. So I went where others thought I would be a good fit.

Ada noted that a friend who had firsthand experiences with the school culture encouraged her to apply:

I was in connection with another counselor educator, who's a really good friend ... and he said, "hey, you should think about doing this." I said, "okay cool." So I did put in an application, got hired, and began the following spring.

Finally, Delilah noted that she had not really considered applying for the position until her friends, colleagues, and former professors said she was a good fit was the job:

they knew me they knew me more academically and a little personally, but not really.

Um and a little professionally in that one of the ones thought I would be a good fit of she and I did a co-teaching together, and so to be quite honest it wasn't really on my radar.

But then when I had the director of the PhD program and two other professors asked if I had considered [applying], at that point I had not but I did trust them. I trusted they knew

me, I trusted they knew where I would be a good fit ... saying that they thought I would be a good fit did impact me. It most certainly made me think twice about applying there because I trusted them

### ***Theme 3: Intrinsic Values***

Many participants noted the importance of working in an environment where they would be able to live consistent with and share their faith and values with their colleagues and students. While making comparisons to both expectations and lived experiences, participants were able to begin to take a deeper look at what different cultural views are valuable and begin to discover what their own values were equally valued. For example, Bessie asserted, "I think the faith aspect that was more important to me than whether or not it was a PWI or other ... because I'm online faculty and I think that's a hugely different animal than being residential or in-seat."

Additionally, Bessie remarked that,

I think because it's a [faith-based] institution ... I have the opportunity to send them scriptures daily, weekly when I send my announcement and I have gotten so many prayer requests. Would you pray because of the things that I put into my announcements and I know that my students know I care

Finally, Ada remarked,

One of the unique things about this particular program that made it enticing was that it was an assistant professor's position, but it was full-time work from home. That I'd be able to have student interaction as an assistant professor but did not have the obligation to be leaving my home and working in the evening, as most graduate school is in the evenings, and that was like another incentive.

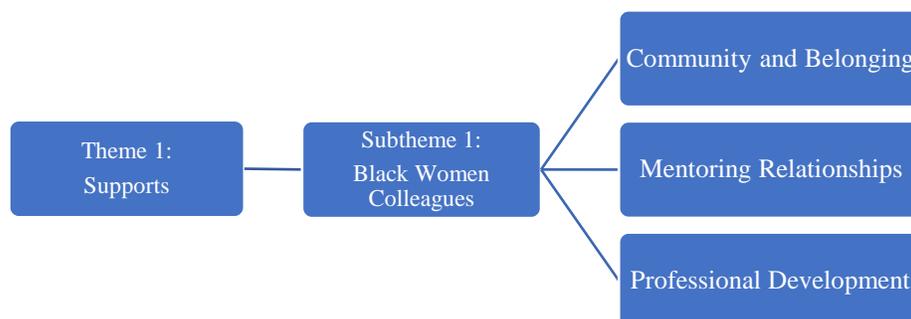
**Research Question 2**

Interview Questions 9 through 20 focused on the participants' experiences while teaching at a PWI. Upon analysis, I found five themes, which were further broken down into subthemes where appropriate. The five major themes were support, experience, authenticity, and building relationships with Black women students. These themes and subthemes will be further discussed in the following sections.

***Theme 1: Support***

Participants discussed the support systems they established once they accepted a position at a PWI. The central support system reported by the participants came from Black women colleagues in their department. Further systems of support included White allies, departmental and program leadership, and external relationships. However, though the participants were able to relate instances where they felt support, some also noted that their expectations of support were not fully met.

**Subtheme 1: Support from Black Women Colleagues.** Throughout the interviews, the participants discussed how building relationships with Black women colleagues was a significant source of personal and professional support as they carried out their duties as core faculty. Thematic analysis of this subtheme led to three further subthemes describing the help received through their relationships with their Black women colleagues: building a sense of community, mentoring relationships, and professional development (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3***Thematic Map for Subtheme 1*

***Subtheme 1.1: Community and Belonging.*** Most participants discussed the importance of having a community where Black faculty members came together to create a safe space to find a place of personal support and belonging. Betty noted,

it’s interesting because even being online. Um I’m thinking of the first two or three times with the staff meeting there was a dozen people that knew me more from an academic perspective that they just reached out in the chat and said, “Hey I see you, congratulations. Welcome aboard.”

Delilah also discussed the welcoming reception she received upon her arrival from other Black colleagues:

people I hadn’t seen in years they would send a chat on Microsoft teams. Oh I see you. I know you were here congratulations and welcome and that kind of thing. ... it was very heartfelt and warm. It felt very heartfelt.

However, Betty also discussed the isolation she felt when first coming to the institution: “as far as faculty, and it felt isolating, because I didn’t really know a lot of people, even though I did adjunct for them before becoming full-time. I didn’t know a lot of faculty members.”

Participants also discussed the importance of the support provided specifically from Black women colleagues. As Bessie noted,

being Black, is a cultural thing ... that we Black folk can be out and about. I don't have to know you from nobody. We can both look at each other, have the same thought, give each other a look, and we know what it is. ... And for me, that's the best way to support is to wear your insular bubble and have Black folk who actually talk. And I don't mean the Black folks that live to please you because you're White. I'm talking real Black

Ida Lou also described the importance of developing relationships with other Black women colleagues: "We do projects together. We talk about student issues together, so we typically be in contact with each other to talk about those specific issues that we may not feel comfortable talking about with other colleagues."

In addition to interactions with colleagues on department-based virtual platforms, Delilah discussed building this sense of community within a virtual space of social media:

I see a sense of community particularly for those that enjoy engaging in social media to that level. I mean people are saying hey is anyone going to this conference. That's an example ... and it just seems very community focused. I would love to drive or does anyone want to share a room. Does anyone want to do presentations together? How were your kids? I heard they were graduating from high school. I have a student that's having, this problem. Can anyone help me?

Finally, some participants described how they proactively seek to establish this sense of community among their Black colleagues at their institution. Betty stated,

so to me, I think it's just being a listening ear to them and allowing for them to vent and vice versa when we needed it and just building our own little community as we needed it because it's such a large program with a lot of faculty. ... it was just taking a risk saying, hey let's chat and get to know each other and it evolved into, you know, more personal

conversations outside of work, and just getting to know them and their families, their life experience.

***Subtheme 1.2: Mentoring Relationships.*** In addition to creating a sense of belonging within the department, the support extended to helping participants navigate the department's policies, procedures, and culture. Delilah discussed how colleagues served as a mentor to her upon her arrival:

I think one of my personal mentors was probably more comforting to me with some of the frustrations. I never felt alone. So I didn't feel left to my own, but I do think my personal mentor was more instrumental in me feeling comfort than the system that [the institution] had set up in place.

Ada also described the importance of having a trusted colleague who could advise her when navigating difficult situations:

Just being able to pick up a phone or text, or reach out if there are questions, ask for the ways in which things have been done, or if I'm frustrated about something, and I want them to look over my response before I send it, or you know, just to make sure that it's not emotionally charged. So having that second set of eyes and an accountability buddy, I think is probably the key to make sure you know, we're not working in isolation. Just like we're ethically required not to practice in isolation, also not teaching in isolation. And so, having support from colleagues within that, I think is necessary and has been most beneficial.

Ada further discussed the importance of colleagues providing support in areas such as "faculty advising, because that's not something you're taught in, in your counselor ed programs." Ada

also described the need for having a safe space to receive this support when navigating the variety of faculty roles:

[What I need] from colleagues is having a space to talk, even having a space to ask questions. And be able to go you know, to get ideas or to ask for help or to see you know, how they may have handled certain situations, or ideas of how to do something differently, or bring something different to the table ... Even how to, if there's a question with how to deal with conflict, or how to deal with grading of a certain item or something like that, there's been support to some extent with that. I'm probably more of a giver of support than a receiver.

Finally, participants discussed the importance of being available to help mentor newer colleagues. As Ida Lou noted,

I feel like I need to connect with the other Black female faculty members, and I need to more research with them and present ... but not just that, but to connect and to support them. So that has been one of the things that I feel like I need to do.

Similarly, Ada noted the importance of being available to new BWF as a mentor:

Usually, with a new faculty, if there's questions, they'll reach out, because I probably created a system, or something or a system for organizing or keeping up with something. And usually, folks will email me text me call me and being able to vent someone to vent to, to kind of know Nope, you're not crazy. I'm typically, the person people will meet with within their first few weeks of onboarding, just to really understand the culture of the university and getting to just kind of navigating at a pace yourself and time management, with how things are done at our institution.

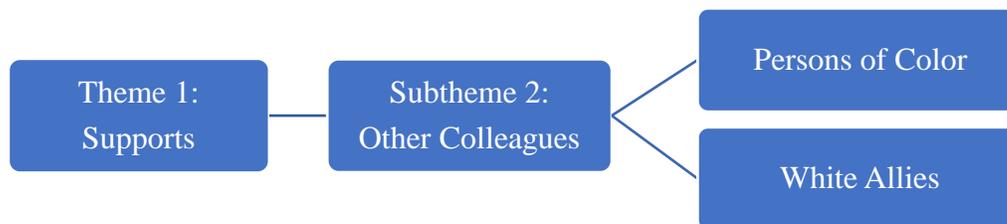
***Subtheme 1.3: Professional Development.*** The participants also highlighted importance of receiving support from their Black women colleagues through collaborations in terms of academic presentations and research. Ida Lou discussed how professional collaboration provides her with an active way to support and connect with other BWF:

I feel like I need to connect with the other Black female faculty members, and I need to do more research with them and present ... but not just that but to connect and to support them. So that has been one of the things that I feel like I need to do.

In addition to her departmental colleagues, Lizzie also stressed the importance of supporting BWF even beyond their immediate colleagues:

We support each other's careers [both inside and] outside of the institutions that we're at ... we'll support one another like hey, do you have any kind of resource for this. Do you know anybody that'll come speak to this, we'll come and speak to each other's classes. If I get picked up at a conference, I'll throw them on my presentation. So we support each other's careers by involving each other in our academic pursuits. We support each other's careers by involving each other in our academic pursuits. I think that's how we've been able to be there for one another. But it's in that circle outside the institution. It's been about having a forum where they get to discuss those unwritten rules in pulling you alongside. ... How I've supported other Black women is by maybe giving some insider information that's been given to me.

**Subtheme 2: Support from Other Colleagues.** Figure 4 shows a thematic map of Subtheme 2.

**Figure 4***Thematic Map for Subtheme 2*

In addition to Black women colleagues, participants discussed their support from colleagues of color and White allies. Ida Lou noted,

We typically are in contact with each other to talk about those specific issues that we may not feel comfortable talking about with other colleagues ... but I also have White colleagues that I also have that same relationship with too, that I can also feel comfortable talking about issues that I face as being a Black faculty; that I feel like they understand as well. ... I also have White colleagues that I also have that same relationship with too, that I can also feel comfortable talking about issues that I face as being a Black faculty that I feel like they understand as well.

Participants also discussed the importance of proactively developing relationships with other faculty of color and White allies. Ida Lou noted,

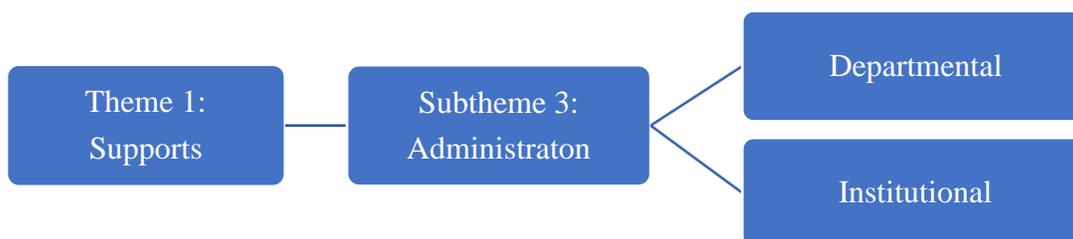
You know maybe um there's a couple of colleagues that I am facilitating a potential conference [presentation] that we can do. I'm the one that reached out and said "hey you know I see that we have these [department-sponsored] conversations that are held with a couple of faculty, would you consider doing something like that? I think we'd make a great racial mix and diversity as well as gender." So I think that would be kinda cool, so that was me initiating it. Well I don't know if this is support, but a couple of them have

reached out and said you know we have similar research. Maybe we could do something together.

**Subtheme 3: Support from the Institution/Administration.** Figure 5 shows a thematic map for Subtheme 3.

**Figure 5**

*Thematic Map for Subtheme 3*



Participants stated how the institution was of support to them as BWF members. Bessie described the support she felt from the department administration:

The very first notion that I would be fully supported, was having my faculty evaluation, with the current department chair and me telling her ... this is what the emails are saying and her saying, instead of asking me how I'm doing it, what I'm saying, could I say it differently ... she didn't ask me. She took the ownness. And she said, "where did we go wrong?" And then told me to continue doing what I'm doing. That's a nice thing that let me know that my way of teaching would be supported. That was very comforting to me and really let me know that I could be at [the institution] long-term provided that. But that gave me a lot of comfort for sure. Even outside of being a Black woman, so to speak. Delilah also described how her expectations for support were met at her current

institution. She stated,

I think my expectations for support were well met. They assign you [to a mentorship group led by a department-trained] mentor where you can field all of your questions or

concerns or issues. Additionally, there was the training that we went through, so the training instructor was available with questions ... Once the training was over then you had a [department-assigned] mentor I believe for a year.

In contrast to these experiences of support, Lizzie described how the overall departmental and institutional support seemed to center more on the faculty's joint religious affiliation versus their identity as a Black woman:

The support comes around being Christian, I think. I see faculty somewhat connect with one another. We pray at meetings. if something happens with you, then they'll get everyone around and get a gift card for you, but they want everyone seeming more homogenous. No one told me this, but it's more homogeneous around being Christian and less of identifying you for your unique presentation as a Christian Black woman or Asian woman or whatever. All in all, the only support system is about being Christian.

Similarly, Delilah discussed how she did not feel that she was supported in her identity as a Black woman:

I'd expecting to get more support around people, feeling like empowered, hey, I'm a Black person first, 'cuz that's just genetically how I was born. or whatever and none of that was there, and I did not because that kind of support doesn't exist. I think this is frowned upon to um connect in that way.

Finally, Lizzie discussed feeling excluded because she felt that the leadership tended to provide more opportunities to faculty who were "most like them":

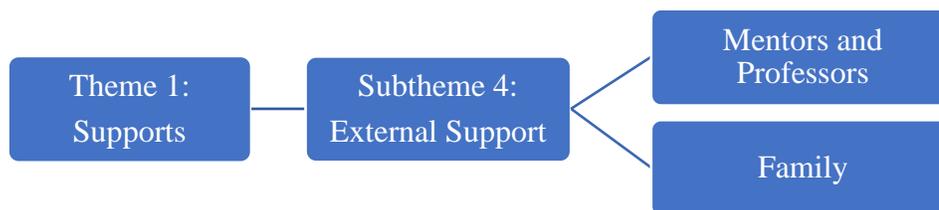
If you have a [large number of] faculty members, and you're the person in charge. You might just say "hey you," let's go do this and think there are no favorites ... but people gravitate to those who are similar to them, or who looks similar, or how they act, or they

know them in some way. So, when most on-campus faculty are Caucasian. What happens is, when they need something or someone, hey you and you, they begin calling on the same people, they think of the same people

**Subtheme 4: External Support.** Figure 6 shows a thematic map for Subtheme 4.

**Figure 6**

*Thematic Map for Subtheme 4*



Many participants affirmed that their primary support came from mentors and professors they had crossed paths with during studies or in previous institutions. According to Betty,

My greatest sources of support came from professors that I crossed paths with who became mentors to me who were at other institutions. And I could probably say it was maybe five faculty members, or that I crossed paths with during my doctoral studies that I leaned on or just talking through what higher ed looks like, what to expect, if I did an online institution, what were some of the things that I needed to be doing to demonstrate that I was competent in this work and proficient.

Additionally, participants discussed the importance of the support they received from their family. As Betty noted,

my husband was my second source of support, because I technically, during a very long stretch of time did not work. ... and then the increase in income will come with that because of you know that time and energy that's put into it.

***Theme 2: Ability to Express Authentic Self***

The participants discussed their struggles in freely expressing their identity as a Black woman while teaching at a PWI. Some Black female faculty noted a hesitancy to present what they consider to be their authentic selves at work. Most of the respondents had weighed, and continue to weigh, the risks when they want to express their identity as a Black woman in their professional spaces. Betty discussed the challenges of navigating institutional expectations while the to express her identity as a Black woman:

Because in everything I do have to decide. It's more than picking your battles. It's how much of this do you really want to go into? I have to decide, which personality do I want to bring to the table? Do I bring the person who is the corporate structure by how corporate America says that we are supposed to behave? Do I not? Do I do this? Do I not? From how I wear my hair to what I put in my ear, having a piercing a nose piercing? So, do I? Don't I? Do I wear the bigger stud? Or the little stud? The earrings I wear. Do I wear the afro puff earrings? Or do I wear just the regular? You know from the shirt? Or the pants that I wear?

Similarly, Ada noted,

I think of this this comedy show ... where she was just explaining how Black women have to switch ... she has to make a decision of how Black she's going to be today. And I could really, really resonate with that. Because in everything I do have to decide.

In addition, participants discussed the tension between societal expectations and being true to their identity as Black women. As one participant noted,

And here it is, I'm shrinking myself down to conform to what society says, I'm supposed to be this good little girl, and sit in the corner, be quiet and speak when spoken to. No,

we're not doing that anymore. We're going to be who we are authentically. And if that means that I'm the bomb.com, then that's what I'm going to be unapologetically.

Ada discussed the importance of being congruent with who she is as a Black woman as central to her own personal integrity:

I have a confidence in myself and in my ability that I will always have the right place at the right time with the right people because I'm genuine. But then I also get to sleep at night because I don't have to turn down who I am. So, you're going to get my kinky hair, you're going to get today it might be kinky in a full afro, tomorrow it might be braids, next week it might be long and straight. Next week it might be purple, it might be green, it might be blue. I don't know, it depends on how I feel when I wake up.

Ada went on to describe the importance of being her authentic self not only for herself but as central to her role as a counselor educator:

But in order to be the best educator that I can be for the students that we are training to be counselors in this profession who are going to deal with every type of human being there is out there in the world, then I have to be authentic and true to myself. And once I learned that, that was probably the most liberating and freeing face that I could be. So, it might be off putting to someone, and I may not get that job at this institution, or that institution. And I'm okay with. Because if you don't want me, I don't want to be there

Finally, participants discussed the need to find and create safe spaces where they could be their authentic selves among trusted colleagues. Because she felt that she makes a difference by being in the department, Lizzie described how she balanced the culture of the department with her views and beliefs:

Is everything perfect the way I want it to be? No. Would I like you to be more so a little more friendly or whatever? Yes. But however, I feel like I do make an impact just my presence. I keep a balance so I can maintain my employment. and if I have different political views, different religious views, I have a forum to express them. I don't have to do it at work. I usually modulate some of the things that I say or think, as most people do at jobs.

Delilah further described the importance intentionally creating safe spaces, both for herself and others, in order to have a forum where her Black women colleagues were free to express their authentic self:

And so, giving that permission to remove any sense of a mask that you think you have to wear in our informal spaces of connection, I think is key. So, creating that space in that open door, that you can come and walk through and have a seat, a virtual seat, for example, to express yourself in any way that you need to, because out there in the world, you may not be able to, or someone will have something to say about it. And so being intentional about creating those spaces, and what that looks like, for me wasn't important. So being intentional about giving back in those ways, for me was necessary.

### ***Theme 3: Experiences with Racism and Implicit Bias***

As the participants described their experiences as a Black woman in a PWI, they noted the impact of implicit forms of bias and racism on their personal and professional lives within the department.

**Subtheme 1: Stereotyped Identities.** The majority stated that there is a thing of dual identity. According to them, they are not seen as counselor educators but as Black counselor educators. During her interview, one participant acknowledged feeling an expectancy of how

BWF are supposed to identify, stating, “The students here have a particular perception of you even before you speak with them, I need to create an awareness and help them unlearn some myths and stereotype that they have exposed to from time.”

The experiences of participants in this case were very similar. They repeatedly mentioned a kind of stereotype of being seen and treated differently. Another participant mentioned that

So, for example, the automatic assumption that I am not competent, so that the immediate need or desire to fact check what I have given as an instruction or questioning a directive or latent choice not to respond to an email or a message or a phone call from an instructor, which is unheard of, especially in professional programs, right. The automatic assumption that a response is condescending or sarcastic, or unprofessional, or, or harsh, not hard but harsh, or mean, which are all personalized, as opposed to Okay, this is this is a professional program

**Subtheme 2: Cultural Insensitivity.** Participants noted that there was a lack of cultural sensitivity in the department towards their Black women colleagues when incidents of racism occur in the society outside of the department. They often felt that their White colleagues did not consider how these events would affect both their Black colleagues as well as their Black students. One participant discussed the lack of cultural sensitivity she experiences surrounding how the faculty responded to the George Floyd murder:

Because when George Floyd was murdered, I paid attention. And I was wondering, we have a faculty chat on Microsoft teams. As I’m checking the chat about this nobody said a mumbling word. And before I knew it, I jumped on the radar. And I said, how are y’all discussing this in the classroom? How are y’all discussing this within the classroom space? But I wanted to see where folk’s heads were at. You know. And at that point, I

became ... I don't want to say deep, but one of the people, because I was so bold as to say, "Are y'all talking about this, because you can't pretend this didn't happen." And faculty had been sending out articles to your faculty, but your Black colleagues are not okay.

Another participant pointed out the impact that her addressing racism and institutional oppression and privilege has on her student evaluations. She then discussed how she experienced how others responded when Colin Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem:

Maybe once a semester, at least, once a school year, [a student will comment on an evaluation that] I can't talk too much about race, lay off the race stuff ... Never got those in class, ever. Only on evaluations. So then for me, I kind of felt like "say it with your chest if you're gonna be bold." That's how you feel. And that was actually the first time that racist feeling, like Colin Kaepernick kneeling [during the national anthem] from football. We can't escape that ... I have to you have students that are going to agree and disagree. What to do? What are you gonna do about it? So first of all, you got to figure out how you feel, because there might be some folks that don't know how do you feel about it? And of course, I had, I found myself ... When it came to Colin Kaepernick, I pump the brakes.

**Subtheme 3: Racism.** In addition to the impact of stereotyped identities and cultural insensitivity, Black women described experiencing incidents of racism in their interactions with their colleagues in the department. According to one participant,

in moments and times where we would have faculty meetings or group meetings surrounding whatever issue or topic at hand. And a Black female colleague would make a statement or recommendation, it would be overlooked. And then when a White male

colleague would make the exact same statement and recommendation. And then people are like, “Oh my gosh, that’s great.” So that lack of awareness by people concerned me, especially when there was the dialogue about expressing multicultural competence, and feeling like it was just a blip, and not really built into the way it needed to be built into conversations. So, for me, I think that’s the biggest challenge knowing that these little moments of bias occur, and people don’t realize it.

Another participant noted how being Black, particularly her physical attributes, is considered unacceptable in the workplace:

I wanted to just say, I’m too Black for you, and keep it moving. You got a problem with my personality, that’s your problem ... Having to explain to the crowd who’s telling me that my hair as it is, as it grows out of my hair follicles, is unprofessional. My hair as it grows. I don’t do anything to it, but telling me that the hair growing on my head is unprofessional? I said, “you have a problem with my hair?” I suggest you get on a phone call Jesus on the main line. You tell him what you want, because I ain’t got time because He’s the one that made my hair like this. So, I explain to them that my hair has been regulated, and the fact that there is a law protecting my hair is mind blowing to them. But I think there’s also personal and professional, because now that you understand this from a personal standpoint.

Participants discussed often feeling like they were not recognized as being fully contributing members of the faculty, unless the participants initiated it or there was some form of complaint against them:

They don’t think about me. The only time my name comes up is if a student complains about me. Then you get center stage, but outside of that, nobody thinks to ask you to be

on anything or involve you. So they'll not send out an email to you, like "Hey, y'all wanna do this or something," unless you purposely place yourself in front of them.

Finally, participants noted that although they did not feel included in the department, they were encouraged that many of their White colleagues were sensitive to the presence of microaggressions and other implicit and explicit racial biases. One participant stated,

I incorrectly assumed that they'd be White ... I was going to get all of them basically saying oh I'm, I'm colorblind I don't see color. No, not understanding micro aggression, macro aggression, not understanding that, ... that there would always be some sort of racial or racist undertone to everything, and I have been pleasantly surprised that it's not the case. I would honestly say in our department about 70 to 75% of the White colleagues get it. And that is a blessing. From my experience now again, I don't know who all other ones are because they're keeping their mouth shut

**Subtheme 4: Unlevel Playing Field.** Participants discussed barriers to professional advancement because as Black women, they were not afforded the same basic assumptions of competence when compared to their White colleagues. As a result, they felt that they had to prove that they were professionally competent when having a negative interaction with their White students. This often left the participants feeling disheartened and discouraged as they observed that they did not see this same standard applied to their White colleagues.

One participant discussed the differences between how an incident between her and a White student was handled compared to how it was treated when a similar situation happened to a White colleague:

So here we are. So, it's disheartening, it gets disheartening. And compared to my counterparts, even how we are supported. So, I can give an example of where ... a White

female faculty member and myself both had similar experiences with a student ... who was just very, very disrespectful, challenged us ... The student [filed a complaint, which was dismissed. they] were told that they had to stay in my class. And then they asked, “How could they be assured that my grading and review of their work would not be biased?” And so, how the student was handled was that my grading was evaluated for the rest of our time together. As opposed to my White female colleague, how the entire staff kind of rallied around her and apologized for the behavior of the student, stated that the student should be referred for a dispositional hearing or, you know, dispositional referral for student development.

Another participant noted the lack of ability to discuss the inequities she has experienced as a Black counselor educator:

Being a Black female counselor educator, is much, much different. There are things that don't get discussed. There are ways in which things are handled even how students perceive black female educators completely different, then how they are perceived [in comparison to] other female educators and especially white male educators.

Finally, one participant discussed how the unequal playing field impacts her personally and professionally:

It is what it is, it can get disheartening. When you know, as a [Black woman] educator that you have put your best foot forward and it is not received, it is not. And that's just with student evaluations, not even mentioning the interaction with students in class and some of the utter disrespect that would not otherwise occur, if I was not a Black female.

#### ***Theme 4: Mentoring Black Students***

Participants discussed their relationships with the Black women students enrolled in the graduate and doctoral programs at a PWI. Parallel to the subthemes discussing support from Black women colleagues, thematic analysis showed three subthemes from the participants' descriptions of their relationships with their Black women students: building a sense of community, mentoring relationships, and professional development of Black women graduate and doctoral students. In addition, participants discussed the importance of advocating for Black women graduate and doctoral students who are experiencing implicit biases and discrimination.

##### **Subtheme 1: Building Community and Belonging Among Black Women Students.**

Each of the participants spoke about the various ways they have supported and related with Black female students through informal professional mentoring that at times is also quite personal. They highlighted the need for a student community, especially for Black students, a space where they can support and learn from each other. Betty stated that she has always wanted to create and maintain a community for Black students in her word, "if I crossed paths with students [of color] who were in higher ed, I was going to make sure that they knew that I was there to support them. And if they needed a listening ear, that was going to be something I could be here for them"

Being Black in a PWI is a lonely journey and thus requires a lot of support. Lizzie mentioned this in her response:

I don't want you to leave. I don't want you to stop participating because you didn't feel connected, or supported, or people didn't understand you. I've put forth a lot of effort to engage my students in that way. ... I think if they don't have something created for students of color, my hope is that I can be one of those persons to help build it in. I really

believe it's important for students to feel supported and when you're at a PWI, you gotta build your own community the best way you know how.

Generally, participants expressed their desire to create a community for Black faculty members and Black students—a place to support students and be supported. Betty stated,

So to hear students express feeling isolated, or this is happening, I try to make sure that they know they can reach out for support or to just process things. I'm not your therapist, but I'm definitely a faculty member who wants to support you and see you get through this program. I don't want you to leave. I don't want you to stop participating because you didn't feel connected, or supported, or people didn't understand you. I've put forth a lot of effort to engage my students in that way.

Betty also added,

I try at different points to make myself available and just say, "Hey if you need me I'm here, if you need anything please reach out" for those students who are African American, I've said, and I say in general that this can be an isolating journey for you, but do know that I'm here, other faculty are here for you, but I always try to demonstrate that if you need support, please ask, please let me know. I can't support you if I don't know.

And so for me, I've really tried to make sure specifically for students of color, my Black females know, the representation is here, and that if you want support you can have it.

Delilah discussed her desire to be available and present for the students of color in the department. She added,

one of the things of going to this PWI, and wanting to be a faculty member, is to show up for minority students. Minoritized students. That is important to me. I think being told by

one of my mentors that once come into internship, when I have face to face weekly with the students, that that should help with that.

**Subtheme 2: Developing Mentoring Relationships with Black Women Students.** In addition to building a supportive community for Black women students, participants discussed their roles to mentor their students in their personal and professional lives as future Black women counselors and counselor educators. To them, it was essential to impact and touch the lives of the students under their care. Lizzie discussed her desire to advance the professional development of her students:

However, what I can do is train up the next generation. Well, that's where I focus my energy and I vowed every student I connect with will know nothing will be a piece of that dismantling. I can't change the students at [Institution] in the culture that has already been ingrained in our doctrine and within them.

Ada added,

I have some research that I do right now with Black female students and my mentees in other organizations that I have mentees with, in leadership positions are Black female, students. For me, that was important. I do a some of it is more informal, as opposed to formal. And usually, what'll happen is a student, will come find me, either because they have heard something about me or saw me somewhere, or they were a student in one of my classes, and they'll reach out and say, "Hey can we stay connected?" And I'm always open to maintaining those connections.

Delilah added "one of the reasons for going to this PWI, and wanting to be a faculty member, is to show up for minority students. Minoritized students. That is important to me." Delilah also commented on how she attempts to support Black female students. She added,

It's interesting because a couple of the faculty reached out to me very specifically to mentor one of the Black female students' academically. So, I've had that happen probably three times ... and then there's a group that I just try to stay intentional. I try to pay it forward. Just say you're not alone. I know what it feels like.

**Subtheme 3: Professional Development for Black Women Students.** Bessie discussed how she advises her Black students about the reality of working in a field that is underrepresented by Black females:

when you graduate you are a marked someplace as a Black woman with a PhD. And you have to learn, do I want to be right? Do I fight the good fight for everybody else or be you know, be in place so that when Black students are there, they see a Black faculty member?

Delilah then added,

I think there's a couple [of students] actually that I have tried to be intentional, whether or not it's just checking in. or "How are you doing? Can I help you, do you need anything?" or saying "we should do this conference, or let's do this conference." I'm thinking of one in particular. Let me help you organize your thoughts with your paper.

**Subtheme 4: Advocating for Black Women Students.** Being counselor educators is more when you are a black woman. Bessie stated,

Our job is fortifying. I fortify those Black female students who stand up for themselves when you make a mistake, or are you [faculty] saying, "well, how dare she talk to me like that?" Are you truly listening? Are you affirming who they are as people? Because, if you don't see them as people and as Christian, then how can you affirm them as future clinical mental health clinicians or future school counselors?

Bessie added,

One of my students had a disagreement with another professor. And this professor basically was trying to trash her character. She said that she was unprofessional ... besides unprofessional, it was another word. I can't recall. But in so many terms, she was calling her an angry Black woman because she stood up for herself, and didn't just take what the professor was giving, which was an incorrect grade ... Next thing I know, the professor is contacting other professors do you have so and so? Do you have issues with her too? Oh no, baby. That's what we're not gonna do. I said no, I have no problems with her. She's one of my best students. So yeah, so things like that. That type of stuff I've experienced as a doc student as well. Which is professors will take a doc student, a grad student's reputation with other professors, which inhibits them from growing in the profession, which inhibits them from gaining other opportunities that they may otherwise get.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the qualitative thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clark (2006) that was used to answer the research question. The results of the thematic analysis included seven themes, six subthemes, and nine sub-subthemes. These themes and subthemes work together to describe the factors that influence the recruitment and retention of BWF in a counselor education and supervision program at a PWI. The following chapter includes an evaluation of these findings as well as how these findings relate to the current literature and advance the knowledge in the field of counselor education. The chapter also contains recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that impacted the recruitment and retention of BWF members in a counselor education program at a PWI. In this chapter, I discuss the findings from the thematic analysis of the interview data. I then discuss the findings in relation to the current literature. Finally, I present the implications for counselor educators, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion**

There has been a lack of research on the factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of BWF in PWIs. Given the importance of recruiting and retaining BWF in counseling education programs, this study was conducted to increase the existing knowledge base. Several of the themes found within this study were consistent with prior research on Black women doctoral students as well as research on Black women's career development, mentoring, implicit biases, and systemic racism. The following sections of the study will relate the themes that emerged from the participants' experiences to previous literature.

#### **Research Question 1**

Participants discussed several reasons that influenced their decision to seek full-time employment in a counselor education program at a PWI. These reasons were organized under three themes: life roles, relationships with colleagues, and intrinsic values.

#### ***Theme 1: Life Roles***

The first theme that emerged was the importance of life roles in each participant's choice to seek their current position. The participants reported wanting a full-time position in a counselor education program, yet they wanted flexibility to maintain a work-life balance and meet the demands of their personal life roles. Participants described struggling to find balance

between two conflicting life roles: professional and personal. Thus, the ability to balance these two roles was a major factor for the participants applying to and accepting a position at a PWI. This first theme is consistent with existing literature addressing how the salience of life roles across the life span influences career identity (Hartung, 2002, as cited in Brown & Lent, 2020; Super & Šverko, 1995).

**Subtheme 1: Professional Life Roles.** During the interviews some participants discussed the professional benefits associated with being a faculty member. These benefits were more than just the pay and went further into their desire to advance professionally as counselor educators. Professionally, these participants had the desire to teach future counselors and counselor educators, interact with students, and make an impact on the field. These findings align with existing research on how BWF value being able to fulfill their professional goals, as they often cannot take positions they are qualified to fill given the competing role of being a caretaker in their families (Asare, 2019; Gardner et al., 2014; Robinson, 2018).

**Subtheme 2: Personal Life Roles.** Most participants highlighted how their personal life roles impacted their decision to seek employment at a PWI. The positions that they accepted offered many of them the opportunity to take care of family and personal roles without the pressure of having to move to another location or being on campus rather than working from home. These findings are consistent with the literature suggesting that the stress Black women feel when balancing their roles as a professional and a caregiver often discourages them from seeking full-time positions (Allison, 2008; Asare, 2019; Gardner et al., 2014).

### ***Theme 2: Relationships with Colleagues***

Participants discussed the importance of having assurance that they would be a good fit in the department from BWF who were already familiar with the climate and culture of the school.

As such, the recommendations of close colleagues and trusted Black faculty members played a key role in participants' decision to seek and accept a full-time faculty position. This is consistent with the literature that suggests enduring and meaningful relationships with colleagues (Salinitri, 2005), such as faculty mentoring, has a positive effect on student and faculty recruitment and retention (Sheridan et al., 2015). Research also indicates lack of support systems and networks and unwelcome, insensitive, and isolated environments are impediments to Black women's academic success (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Therefore, the established relationships between the participant and the current faculty member provide a preliminary support system that allow them to navigate the complex role of being Black women at PWIs (Kelly & Winkle-Wagner, 2017). Without mentors or colleagues who resemble themselves and/or their struggles, BWF often find it difficult to speak to other colleagues regarding experiences of racism, sexism, privilege, and inequity, because the privilege belonging to those colleagues becomes the lens through which these experiences are re-interpreted and dismissed (De Welde et al., 2016).

### ***Theme 3: Intrinsic Values***

Finally, participants discussed the importance of their values and faith in their decision to accept a position at a PWI. As noted by one participant, the ability to work in a place that reflected their spiritual values was a stronger factor than the fact that it was a PWI. This is consistent with the literature that suggests though BWF struggle to feel a sense of belonging at PWIs, which often stems from the absence of a diverse faculty and administrative staff (Eakins & Eakins, 2017), some participants felt that having an overarching connection through common spiritual beliefs was an important consideration as they contemplated applying to their current positions.

## **Research Question 2**

Participants indicated several reasons that influenced their decision to remain in a full-time position in a counselor education program at a PWI such as various support systems. Though participants also discussed experiencing explicit and implicit racism, they provided their rationale for remaining in their current role or roles. These experiences were organized under four themes: supports, ability to express authentic self, experiences with racism and implicit biases, and mentoring Black students.

### ***Theme 1: Supports***

Participants reported that most of the support they received prior to accepting their current positions were primarily from their fellow Black women colleagues. The sources of their support varied, resulting in the emergence of four subthemes: support from Black women colleagues, other colleagues, support from administration, and external supports. These findings are consistent with the findings of previously conducted studies on BWF in academia (Bright, 2020; Gasman et al., 2011).

**Subtheme 1: Support from Black Women Colleagues.** Participants discussed how building relationships with Black women colleagues was a major source of both personal and professional support as they carried out their duties as core faculty. The importance and benefits of being mentored by Black women colleagues described by the participants was consistent with the literature on the role of mentorship in retention of BWF (McConner, 2014; Robinson, 2018). Relationships with fellow Black women colleagues resulted in feeling better equipped to respond to departmental and institutional politics, possessing professional networks, and having emotional support due to relating to the stresses associated with being a woman of color in academia.

***Subtheme 1.1: Community and Belonging.*** Participants discussed the importance of having a community that provided a place of intimate support, where Black faculty members could come together to relate personally with one another, vent, or discuss things bothering them. This created a safe place where they felt a sense of belonging. Existing literature on mentorship among BWF also shows that having strong faculty networks encompassing social and professional support fosters a sense of community and belonging for BWF (Grant & Ghee, 2015).

***Subtheme 1.2: Mentoring Relationships.*** Participants discussed the importance of having a trusted colleague to mentor and advise them as they learned how to navigate the policies, procedures, and culture within their department. Participants noted the benefits of having experienced BWF to discuss how to handle various student departmental issues. At the same time, these informal mentors provided them with a space to voice frustrations and process their emotions to ensure they do not come off as being “emotionally charged” in various conversations. The more experienced participants also reported feeling a sense of responsibility for mentoring new BWF and helping them to acclimate to the department, stating how important it was that BWF refrain from working, practicing, or teaching in isolation. This is consistent with other studies that found mentoring relationships as providing a safe place to help BWF navigate through departmental and institutional politics, policies, and procedures (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Jenkins, 2005; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005).

***Subtheme 1.3: Professional Development.*** Participants reported the importance of collaborative relationships that supported their academic presentations and research agendas. They described ways that their colleagues from both outside and inside the institution have helped to advance their professional development. This included presenting with other BWF at

conferences, traveling to speak to each other's classes, providing guidance in navigating research and publication procedures, including each other in various academic pursuits, and providing a forum where unwritten rules can be discussed. As seen in prior research, Black women working in academia use their professional support systems to exchange ideas, discuss interests and needs, and provide mutual support (McConner, 2014). These include forming research and publication teams with Black faculty and senior faculty members who share similar interests, which helps accelerate their professional development (Tilman, 2001).

**Subtheme 2: Support from Other Colleagues.** Additional areas of support were provided from persons of color and White allies. One participant spoke on her confidence in talking about specific issues, including racial issues, with her White colleagues. She described how she felt that many of her White colleagues are able to understand the issues she faces as a BWF member. Another participant spoke on how both persons of color and White colleagues have offered to facilitate conference presentations, research topics, and creating more diversity within the department by collaborating. These findings add new insight, as existing literature does not tend to focus on the presence or benefit of White allies or other persons of color as a source of support for BWF at PWIs.

**Subtheme 3: Support from the Administration.** Participants discussed the departmental and institutional support they received from administration. Overall, participants discussed feeling supported within the department, especially by the department chair. This included feeling recognized as a Black woman. However, most participants also noted that they felt excluded because opportunities seemed to be reserved for faculty who resembled those in leadership rather than being inclusive. In addition, participants reported feeling that they are

often overlooked for professional opportunities, or their voices go unheard in meetings. They also questioned if being online and not residential faculty created further separation.

One participant discussed how the support she felt at the institutional level was centered around having a homogenous identity as a Christian, as opposed to the diversity of her identity as a Black woman. Another participant discussed how the lack of support and inclusion she felt at her respective institution was in part because she was a part of a large group of faculty, as opposed to being a valued, included, and contributing faculty member. Thus, though each participant reported feeling supported at the department level, when looking at the overall climate of the university, some participants reported feeling supported, valued, and included, and others reported feeling invalidated and unsupported as a Black woman.

**Subtheme 4: External Supports.** Participants also discussed the support they received outside of the institution. A few participants expressed how the support they received came from mentors and professors they worked with during their doctoral program or while working at a previous institution. The second source of external support discussed by participants was from family. One participant discussed the support she received from her husband, especially during the long stretch of time she did not work. These findings are consistent with previous findings that noted the importance of individuals like family, friends, and campus staff who provide BWF with encouragement, positivity, communication, trust, faith, reassurance, patience, and understanding (Thomas, 2018).

### ***Theme 2: Ability to Express Authentic Self***

All participants discussed the challenges that they face if or when they express their genuine selves as a Black woman in the department. These experiences centered around feeling pressured to meet institutional and societal expectations, their identity as a Black woman, and the

importance of creating safe spaces to be their authentic selves. Many of the participants stated that they felt the need to suppress their identity as a Black woman in order to feel accepted or meet expectations, causing hesitancy to present what they considered to be their authentic selves at work. Most of the respondents faced concerns about their speech, attire, and physical appearance that does not conform to the dominant culture. One participant discussed how she felt the need to be silent and deny herself as a Black woman to conform to societal expectations. Participants also discussed how they had to weigh the risks associated with going against the societal standards of the majority culture. For many participants, it was a matter of “choosing their battles.” Previous research has also highlighted that the commitment of BWF to examine the experiences of Black people in America has often placed their careers at risk (Martin et al., 2019).

While noting their struggles with institutional and societal expectations, participants shared how they maintained their identity as a Black woman. Participants expressed feeling empowered to remain genuine in their identities as Black women and not having to conform to the majority and hide their cultural identity in the workplace. Most participants had a strong sense of who they are as a Black woman and how their strong sense of identity allowed them to remain confident in their identity. All participants shared about the importance of having a place where they could authentically be themselves, express themselves, and discuss their cultural identities without feeling penalized.

### ***Theme 3: Experiences with Racism and Implicit Racism***

As the participants described their experiences as a Black woman in a PWI, they noted the impact of implicit forms of bias and racism on their personal and professional lives within the department. The participants in this study described the campus climate as being student

centered, faith based, and well organized. Yet the climate was somewhat disconnected from the needs of Black women.

**Subtheme 1: Stereotyped Identities.** All participants discussed how they felt that they were not seen as counselor educators but as Black counselor educators. As such, their competence as counselor educators was based on racial and gender stereotypes and not their credentials and accomplishments. This resulted in participants feeling that there was an assumption among students that they are not as competent as their White counterparts. The findings were supported by existing literature that BWF and other minoritized women at PWIs have noted that their race or ethnicity is more often recognized than their qualifications and credentials (Cole, 2001; Davis & Fry, 2019).

**Subtheme 2: Cultural Insensitivity.** Cultural insensitivity played a large part in the experiences of all six participants. Participants noted that at times, there was a lack of cultural sensitivity in the department toward their Black women colleagues when incidents of racism occur outside of the department or institution. They felt that their White colleagues often did not consider how these societal events would affect their Black colleagues as well as their Black students. As a result, they were left in the position of addressing these social events with the faculty themselves as well as initiating the departmental response to these issues with the student body.

Participants also discussed issues they encountered when discussing the impact that these societal issues would have on their minoritized clients as well as their classmates of color. At times, this resulted in negative student evaluations disagreeing with the focus given to systemic racism, oppression, and privilege. This created a dilemma because ethically BWF needed to address these issues with students, yet they knew that it would negatively impact them.

**Subtheme 3: Racism.** When discussing equity, some participants noted that there were times where they felt they were not treated by administration in a manner comparable to their White colleagues, particularly when attempting to resolve negative encounters with students. This centered on feeling that they had to prove that they were competent as educators in the situation compared to their White colleagues in similar circumstances. Participants also described experiences where they felt that their contributions to faculty discussions were not given the same weight as it was when it was later presented by a White male colleague; they felt that there was not a comparable recognition of their expertise when they spoke. Another participant noted how some colleagues considered their physical attributes and cultural identity as a Black woman as unprofessional in the workplace and other professional venues. Other participants also described how presenting their authentic selves was considered as being “too Black” in the department, which left them feeling that being a Black woman in of itself could impede their professional advancement. Despite these negative experiences and not feeling included in the department at times, participants were encouraged that many of their White colleagues were sensitive to the presence of microaggressions and other implicit and explicit racial biases they faced.

**Subtheme 4: Unlevel Playing Field.** Most participants reported mostly positive interactions with students; however, some participants recalled having an unpleasant encounter with White students. Participants further discussed barriers to professional advancement because as Black women, they were not afforded the same basic assumptions of competence when compared to their White colleagues. As a result, they felt that they had to prove that they were professionally competent when having a negative interaction with their White students. This often left the participants feeling disheartened and discouraged as they observed that they did not

see this same standard applied to their White colleagues. These participants' encounters aligned with existing literature that attested to a commonality existing among Black faculty, which was the regularity of being challenged by their White students at a much higher rate than their White counterparts (Allison, 2008).

#### ***Theme 4: Mentoring Black Students***

Each of the participants spoke of various ways they have supported and related with Black female students through informal professional mentoring that at times is also quite personal. They highlighted the need for student community, especially for Black students, as a space where they get to support and learn from each other. The stories shared by each participant regarding their heightened commitment to empower Black students further expands existing literature of how the underrepresentation of BWF dramatically impacts the recruitment, retention, and persistence of Black students (De Welde et al., 2016).

##### **Subtheme 1: Building Community and Belonging Among Black Women Students.**

Aside from being just an educator or faculty member, participants discussed their personal commitments to serve other roles in the lives of students, creating lasting impressions. To the participants, being a counselor educator was not just about teaching; it was more about creating an awareness, making impacts, and touching lives of the students under their care. Participants shared about the intentionality of affirming their roles to students as supportive faculty members dedicated to seeing them progress professionally in addition to making themselves available for students who may feel isolated because of their racial identity. All participants valued the significance of ensuring that Black students remained aware that the representation is present, and support is available whenever they need it. The mere presence of Black faculty on campus

offers an incentive to Black students that they can complete their degree requirements while contributing to their community (George, 2001).

**Subtheme 2: Developing Mentoring Relationships with Black Women Students.** The findings for this subtheme mirrored the findings found when discussing support from Black women colleagues. Participants discussed their commitment to mentor students in both their personal and professional lives as future Black women counselors and educators. Participants discussed how showing up for minoritized students is important as well as remaining open to maintaining connections with students in their classes or those they mentored previously. The value in staying intentional in relationships and being committed to training the next generation of counselors and counselor educators was also discussed. These findings are consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Thomas (2018), which showed that Black women undergraduate students reported needing mentor-like figures in their lives in addition to family and friends. A lack of mentoring among BWF and Black students is a major reason colleges and universities have had difficulty retaining Black students (Davis et al., 2011).

**Subtheme 3: Professional Development for Black Women Students.** BWF shared how they view themselves as being more than just a relatable presence in the lives of Black female students. Participants discussed how they aim to enhance the professional growth of their Black female students. Participants shared about Black women being marked once they complete their degrees and having to learn discernment regarding their identity as Black leaders in the counseling profession. They also shared about providing supportive opportunities for professional collaborations, offering feedback, or simply checking in to ensure students are okay or to pass along opportunities for professional advancement. BWF contribute to the professional development of their Black students by creating enduring and meaningful relationships while

focusing on the quality of those relationships (Salinitri, 2005). This is inclusive of factors such as mutual respect, willingness to learn from others, and the use of interpersonal skills.

**Subtheme 4: Advocating for Black Women Students.** Participants shared about situations that led them to advocate on behalf of their Black female students and the need to both fortify and affirm these students as future leaders. They each shared about unique situations they experienced in their doctoral programs that instilled in them a need to advocate for Black women students and how having BWF as an ally can significantly impact the graduate school experience for many women of color. Institutional politics have often made it difficult for Black female students to receive opportunities, recognition, or even mutual respect from their White professors and colleagues (Beachum, 2015; Deardoff, 2009).

#### **Implications for Counselor Educators**

The results of this study provide new insight into the factors that led BWF to accept positions at PWIs. The most significant finding suggests that offering the opportunity to balance their professional and personal life roles would enhance the recruitment of BWF. In addition, the current BWF in the department appear to play an important role in recruiting new BWF, giving potential candidates a better sense of their potential for a positive fit within the department. Finally, given the importance of shared values in the decision-making process of accepting a position at a PWI, departments should examine and evaluate the mission and core values of their BWF. Proactively creating a climate that respectfully acknowledges and accommodates a diversity of cultural values will enhance both recruitment and retention of BWF.

This study also provides a greater understanding of the factors for enhancing the retention and advancement of BWF at PWIs. The most significant finding centered around the importance of supports, particularly from their Black colleagues. To help retain BWF, departments can help

facilitate the development of communities that will provide supportive networks or safe spaces where BWF can voice their feelings, learn how to navigate the departmental and institutional culture, gain opportunities to enhance professional development, and engage with White allies and other colleagues of color.

The study also highlights the need for departments and individual faculty to gain a greater awareness of the impact of systemic implicit biases and racism on BWF. As such, it is important that the professional standards of the department respectfully acknowledge and accommodate the diverse physical and cultural traits of BWF and other persons of color. Furthermore, the department should seek to actively engage with values, which will enhance both recruitment and retention of BWF.

Finally, BWF discussed the importance of their role in supporting Black women students in enhancing both student and faculty retention. However, because these relationships were often developed informally, their role in mentoring Black students was not considered a part of faculty service for the purposes of professional advancement. Given these findings, departments should consider formalizing the role of mentoring Black students to be as essential as any other forms of service at the university.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings, there are several recommendations for future research. First, further research is needed in examining the impact that balancing life–work roles has on the recruitment and retention of BWF at PWIs. This study found that being in an online environment allowed participants to maintain this role balance, positively impacting their decision to accept a position at a PWI. Overall, studies of faculty work–life balance have revealed significant gender differences, with women faculty reporting greater difficulty in maintaining their desired work-

life balance due to teaching, research, and service responsibilities, resulting in lower levels of job satisfaction (Asare, 2019; Starz, 2019). But additional research is needed to gain further knowledge on the impact of their life-work roles in recruiting as well as retaining BWF for both residential and online faculty positions.

Second, further research is needed regarding the role of support networks have on retention and advancement of BWF at PWIs. Though research findings support the importance of these support systems among Black doctoral students (Crayton, 2019; Henderson, 2019), little research has focused on BWF. The results of this study indicated how establishing and maintaining relationships with other Black women colleagues provided the participants with a supportive community where they could process issues faced in their personal and professional development in a safe environment. These communities created safe spaces to process incidents of racism and implicit biases described by the participants. Given the importance of retaining and advancing BWF in counselor education programs, additional research is needed to examine the role of support networks retention and recruitment of BWF at BWIs.

Lastly, research supports the importance that mentoring by BWF has on retention for Black doctoral students (De Welde et al., 2016). Yet little research has been conducted examining the importance that mentoring students has on the retention of BWF. The results of this study found that the participants placed significant on their role of mentoring of Black female students. Furthermore, the themes that emerged when BWF discussed mentoring students paralleled the themes that emerged when discussing the support BWF received from their Black women colleagues. This would suggest that BWF wanted to provide the same sense of community for Black women students that they used to advance their personal and professional development. Therefore, further research is needed on how the role of mentorship among BWF

and Black women students impacts the recruitment, retention, and persistence of BWF and Black students.

### **Limitations**

The study's data were obtained from Black faculty members at a single institution who chose to participate in the study. Additionally, given the focus of the study, potential participants may have been hesitant to participate in the study for fear of retribution. Some participants were hesitant to fully describe their experiences because the unique nature of their stories could have made them identifiable despite following the protocols in place to conceal their identity. However, this does not diminish the importance of the findings that were derived from the voices of these participants. Finally, as a Black female doctoral student in a counselor education program, I was aware of the potential for bias as I identified with my participants' stories. Given this potential, I consistently consulted with my dissertation chair to process and manage any biases that emerged during the interview process and data analysis.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that impacted the recruitment and retention of BWF members in a counselor education program at a PWI. The results of the study included seven themes, 15 subthemes, and three sub-sub-themes. These themes, subthemes and sub-subthemes work together to describe the experiences that had a direct impact on each participants' decision to apply to and accept a position at a PWI. This chapter included an evaluation of these findings as well as how these findings relate to the current literature and advance the knowledge in the field of counselor education.

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### **APPENDIX A: Interview Questions**

The purpose of the study is to examine the shared experiences of Black women faculty in Counselor Education programs at predominantly White institutions. The study seeks to identify the central themes that emerge from Black women faculty narratives about the factors that influenced Black women to accept and remain in a faculty position in a Counselor Education program at a predominantly White institution.

1. What drew you to seek employment as a full-time faculty member in your current department?
2. As a Black female, how did that impact your decision to apply for your current position?
3. What were your overall expectations as you considered applying for the position?
4. What were your expectations for advancement as you considered applying for the position?
5. What were your expectations for support as you considered applying for the position?
6. What were your anticipated challenges as you considered applying for the position?
7. You described your expectations when applying for the position. Once you were hired, what was it like for you?
8. As a Black female, how does that impact your experiences your current position?

Research shows that there are some common barriers and challenges that are experienced by Black women faculty. So, now I want to shift and ask you about your experiences in these areas. Please only answer to the level that you feel comfortable with answering. All the specifics will be made non-identifiable. You will also be able to review the transcript and remove anything you feel may be identifiable.

9. As a Black woman, have you experienced challenges and barriers in your current position?
10. Do you feel that these experiences impacted your ability to advance as a professional?
11. What are your experiences in pursuing leadership positions?
12. Have you experienced any other barriers to advancement that you'd like to share about?
13. How would you describe the overall climate of your current workplace?
14. Do you feel that you can discuss how you feel with your colleagues or administration?

Let's talk about the supports you have experienced in your current workplace.

15. What types of support have you received in your current position?
16. Could you describe any experiences where you have been able to provide support to your colleagues?
17. Could you describe any experiences where your colleagues have been able to support you?
18. Could you describe any experiences where you have been able to support Black female students?
19. If you could change one thing about your current working environment, what would it look like?
20. Before we end, as you reflect on your experience being a Black woman faculty member, is there anything else you would like to add that has been left unsaid?

## APPENDIX B: Recruitment Letter

Dear Counselor Education Core Faculty

As a graduate student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine the factors that influence Black women to accept positions at predominately White institutions and promote their retention in that position, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be Black female faculty who are teaching full time in a Counselor Education program. Participants, if willing, will be asked to meet with me for an individual interview that will last approximately 45-60 minutes or a focus group that will last approximately 60-90 minutes. Both the individual interview and the focus group will be audio-recorded and conducted via Zoom. You will also be asked to complete a member checking of the interview or focus group transcript that will take 10–15 minutes and to respond to a demographic questionnaire that can be completed in approximately 3 to 5 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. To participate, please, complete the attached demographic questionnaire, and send it to [REDACTED] to schedule the interview or focus group. If you are found to be eligible, you will be asked to sign and return the consent form prior to the interview or focus group.

Sincerely,

Caitlyn M. Ybarra, MA, LPC, NCC  
Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies  
[REDACTED]

**APPENDIX C: Participant Questionnaire**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym (to be completed by researcher): \_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify as Female: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify as African American/Black: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently teaching full-time in a Counselor Education program: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Rank \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been teaching in your current position? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you want to be contacted?

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify)

Please provide any additional information you would like for me to know about you.

**APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form**

**Title of the Project:** The Shared Experiences of Black Women Faculty in Counselor Education Programs at Predominately White Institutions: A Thematic Analysis

**Principal Investigator:** Caitlyn M. Ybarra, M.A., LPC, NCC, Liberty University

**Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a Black female who is teaching full-time in a Counselor Education program. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

**What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of the study is to examine the shared experiences of Black women faculty in Counselor Education programs at predominantly White institutions. The study seeks to identify the central themes that emerge from Black women faculty's narratives about the factors that influenced them to accept and remain in a faculty position in a Counselor Education program at a predominantly White institution.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an audio-recorded 45- to 60-minute interview or a video-recorded 60- to 90-minute focus group via Zoom.

2. Review the interview or focus group transcript for accuracy. Revise or remove any transcript content to ensure that the data accurately reflects your voice (10-15 minutes).

#### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include gaining a greater understanding of the factors that can enhance the recruitment and retention of Black women faculty who teach at predominately White institutions.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings and transcriptions will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher and the supervising professor will have access to these recordings.

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Caitlyn M. Ybarra. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] and/or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Mary Deacon, at [REDACTED].

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED].

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record or video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

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Printed Subject Name

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Signature & Date