WOMEN LISTENING: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TENURED BLACK WOMEN COUNSELOR EDUCATORS AT HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

by

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(Under the Direction of Brandee Appling)

ABSTRACT

Black feminist thought (BFT) was used in this study to explore the lived experiences of tenured black women counselor educators at historically White institutions. The study employed BFT to understand better how they positively navigated their experiences. The analysis identified three primary themes and nine subthemes, exemplifying how Black women Counselor educators successfully navigated the halls of historically White institutions to become tenured. The findings of this study can transcend the way practicing counselors, counselor educator programs, leaders of institutions, and Black women counselor educators create and hold space amid institutional, systemic, and gendered racism. Furthermore, these implications can principal decisions on policies and practices that support the positive alignment of hiring practices and tenure practices to include course and service assignments.

INDEX WORDS: Black women, Tenured, Higher education, Historically White
                 institution, phenomenology, Black feminist thought

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INSTITUTIONS.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is honorably dedicated to one of the most valuable players in my life, my mom, Shirley Ann Simmons. I have spent the majority of my life watching and learning and becoming as I watched you make sacrifices for us while trying to be your best self in and out of the night. Your spirit of perseverance is what I know and love best about you. You never gave up! You always believed that I could do whatever I put my mind and hand to. Thank you, Moma. And my dad, Willie James, thank you for your courageous and fearless spirit, for never accepting the status quo or being bossed. I valued those qualities and held them close during this process, especially when hard times arose. Because of you both, I am reminded to BELIEVE in ME, and for that, I'm eternally grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, lifted over ditches, and have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?

(Sojouner Truth, as cited by Robinson, 1851)

In the middle of the Women's Civil Rights Convention was Sojourner Truth, who wanted to know if she was just as deserving of being treated as a woman as the White women in the room. She did not separate herself by color because she was now a free woman and spoke from that platform. In a crowded room where White women were declaring their independence and their rights to have and hold certain inalienable rights, Sojourner Truth stood and spoke her truth. Fitch and Mandziuk (1997) commented, "Throughout her rhetoric, she employed her characteristic sharp wit and her engaging narrative style as she sought to influence her hearers" (p. 89).

Truth (as cited by Robinson, 1851) additionally asked what intellect has "to do with women's rights or negroes' rights. If my cup will not hold but a pint and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?" (p. 160). This statement speaks directly to the challenges Black women counselor educators (BWCEs) face as they seek tenure. One of the primary areas of requirement is their scholarship, which is an outpouring of their intellect. Moreover, their writings about their pieces of knowledge and the factors that further inform their intellect and others in their communities go against the standard colonized way of the world. Therefore, Hammonds (1997) stated that Black women were relegated to the

"lowest position on the scale of human development" (p. 95) and summarily excluded from the creation and development of knowledge systems today. In the case of BWECs, their voices continue to be muted, and their tenure process is slowed or even halted.

Collins (2001) became engrossed in finding another way to explain what Black women need to have as a mantle of declaration of rights and existence as a woman in the academe. Black feminist thought (BFT) was brought forth to build community and sustain collective bargaining for Black women by magnifying and expanding a theoretical perspective that privileged only Black women. According to Collins (2000), Black feminism fosters a mindset of intellectual inclusion, and she suggested that Black feminist thought challenges Western intellectual traditions of exclusivity and chauvinism. Because of their position within the intersecting hierarchies of race, gender, and class, Black women as a group possess a "unique angle of vision" (Collins, 1990, p. 35) on the social world. In other words, many experiences foster the development of a unique Black woman's standpoint. A Black woman (feminist) standpoint signifies that the knowledge gained about an individual or other group in society is acquired from multiple factors related to their historical position in society.

When compared to their White peers, Black women are still asking the infamous question, "Ain't I a woman?" Truth alluded to the fact that she, too, was an example of women's rights (Robinson, 1851). Lord (1984) stated that White women ignore their built-in privilege of Whiteness and defined the term *woman* as their own experience alone. In the meantime, Black women become *othered*—the outsider whose experiences and traditions are too alien to comprehend. They traditionally support the institutional gatekeepers in the form of White males. They generally direct and govern the rules of the institution as it relates to who meets the qualifications (Ybarra, 2021). This type of mindset has resulted in institutional policies at

historically White institutions (HWIs) that continue oppressive conventions and create unfriendly working conditions for Black women working or seeking to work in such higher education organizations (Ybarra, 2021). At HWIs, "Many of these gatekeeping functions remain institutionalized and professionalized, contributing to the continued underrepresentation of Black [women] faculty" (Ybarra, 2021, p. 2). Black women contend with controlled external images, and the interplay of race and gender can have a negative impact on career advancement (Owens, 2016), as if Black women lack alienable rights because something is wrong with them. Given the importance of Black women and Black women counselor educators (BWCEs), these processes, systems, and understandings need to be examined to decrease the limitations of BWCEs who did not successfully acquire tenure at HWIs. Moreover, the statistics and facts from previous research indicate the need to further research and document the lived experiences of BWCEs who do attain tenure at HWIs for the betterment of Black women, BWCEs, Black students, and for the academy.

In the (2018) article "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Black Women's Blueprint for Institutional Transformation in Higher Education," Patton and Haynes remind readers that, despite Black women's high achievement as collegians and academics, the myriad of ways institutionalized oppression manifests through racism and sexism routinely devalue their ways of knowing. The use of BFT helps make sense of these challenges and provides a critical record of these challenges through various historical moments (Collins, 1990).

Problem Statement

Black female tenured faculty in counselor education programs are underrepresented, and they face barriers in higher education that make the tenure process challenging (Behar-Horenstein et al., 2012; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Tenure is critical for Black female counselor

education faculty because it offers certain protections and academic liberties (Euben & Lee, 2005). As a result, the tenure platform for Black female counselor educators serves as an avenue to recruit and retain Black female counselor education faculty, Black female counselor education students in doctoral programs, and Black female counselors-in training. Successful recruitment and retention of Black female students and faculty in counselor education can reduce the likelihood of nondiversified counselor education departments and the risk that students and educators will choose to receive their education and training elsewhere (Bradley, 2005; Bryant et al., 2005). Therefore, it is imperative to hold space for Black women counselor educators to tell their of their success and use these stories to allow space for other and budding Black women counselor educators at HWIs and other higher education institutions.

Background of the Problem

The general competitive nature of academia creates challenges for all tenure-track professors. However, scholars around the world suggest that the degree and frequency of challenges confronted by tenure-track professors in the academy often differ between faculty of non-White races and ethnicities and their White counterparts (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Pittman, 2010; Zick et al., 2008). Similar differences are documented internationally in examining the experiences of male and female faculty members (Silander et al., 2013). Moreover, Garner (2006) suggests that European scholars might find the American context valuable in examining how White privilege manifests in organizations, including universities. Specifically, in the United States, Black female faculty members pursuing tenure and promotions at predominantly White universities report feeling fraught with anxiety, alienation, isolation, and frustration (Frazier, 2011; Griffin, 2012). However, despite the myriad of challenges they experience, there are, and continue to be, BWCEs who are successful and thriving in academia.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to better understand the experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators in CACREP-accredited counseling programs in (HWIs). This research aimed to capture the lived experiences of Black women counselor educators to gain a richer understanding of the cultural strengths and resiliency strategies of Black women counselor educators who successfully become tenured at historically White institutions. It is essential to examine their work experiences using a Black feminist framework that addresses the intersection of race, gender, class, ability and sexuality, and citizenship for Black women. The objective was to gain insight into the academic, social, and emotional experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators as they provide support for themselves and the students, they serve in the counselor education program and offer recommendations for practices, policies, and future research.

Research Question

The phenomenon of a Black woman is powerful in scholarship, as demonstrated by Dr. Carol Anderson, bell hooks, Dr. Brittney Cooper, Dr. Joy Degruy, Michelle Alexander, and Toni Morrison, to name a few. The voices of Black women must have time and space to breathe in the halls, corridors, and classrooms of today's future scholars. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of Black women in counselor education who had successfully earned tenure. The research question that guided this research study was as follows:

• What are the experiences of tenured Black women Counselor Educators in CACREP-accredited counseling programs at historically White institutions (HWIs)?

Theoretical Foundation

My objective in situating the current study in Black feminist thought (BFT) was to describe the experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at HWIs and capture their unique resilience and resistance strategies. Researchers assert that a perceptive bond of sisterhood occurs when Black women interview other Black women. The bond of sisterhood creates trust and prompts dialogue, which is ideally qualitative research (Collins, 2009; Johnson-Bailey, 1999). As the researcher of this study, a Black female doctoral student and social justice advocate, I aimed to amplify the voices of BWCE at HWIs. The framework of BFT allowed me to view social justice-oriented scholarship with advocacy (Lewis et al., 2011; Toporek et al., 2009) to shift studies on the lived experiences of Black women from deficit-oriented ideology to a strength-based framework. Engaging with the research through the lens of BFT created space for tenured Black women counselor educators to share their own experiences and concerns, particularly those related to an HWI or within an HWI environment.

Black feminist thought as a lens allows researchers to recognize this research as a political stance where there is a commitment to making sure the work is self-reflexive. Researchers must answer personally and professionally: "What's my investment in this research?" or, as Alice Walker (1972) expressed, "What is the work my soul must have?" (p. 409). Madison (2005) wrote extensively on positionality and stressed the importance of being vulnerable and transparent in judgment and evaluation. When engaging in Black feminist thought, scholars have to have a comfortable relationship with theory. This means that, even in the midst of struggle and confusion, the researcher must commit to wrestling with uncomfortable ideas.

Significance of the Study

The goal of the current study was to highlight Black female faculty's experiences in counselor education and understand how they persisted towards attaining tenure. This study has implications for practices and policy-making in higher education settings where attrition is an issue for Black women and provides information for those in counselor education on how to better support Black female tenure-track faculty. The qualitative research design is the best approach to understanding the phenomena of Black women counselor educators (BWCEs) at HWIs. Specifically, a phenomenological approach is necessary to capture, document, and highlight their lived experiences as tenured BWCEs. This approach allows for exploring and analyzing the lived experiences of Black women at an HWI through thick, rich descriptions (Creswell,1998). Black feminist theory (BFT) allows for the opportunity to place Black women's voices at the center of research to enhance the visibility of their unique experiences and acts of resistance (Robinson, et al., 2013).

Conceptual Framework

Many higher education settings are dominated by cultures that lack the experiences and exposure necessary to understand the unique standpoint of Black women. Contemporary research on the dominant cultures' experience includes graduate socialization (Robinson, 2013); barriers to success (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017); mentoring (Rasheem et al., 2018); multiple issues of oppression due to race, gender, class, and identity (Walkington, 2017); and self-preservation measures (Shavers & Moore, 2014). Willis et al. (2019) discovered three elements common in the experiences of Black women on HWIs: (a) feeling "only and othered," (b) feeling boxed in and silenced, and (c) finding support. In addition, Black women face hurdles due to isolation, lack of support structures, and intersecting identities in academic settings (Collins, 1990; Willis

et al., 2019). These intersecting identities influence how Black women navigate educational environments, interlocking feelings of oppression due to racism, sexism, and classism. Unfortunately, because of this, "many in the academy automatically discount the standpoint of African American women and the benefit their unique perspectives can bring to the institution. Namely, Black women tend to be transformational and collaborative" (Davis & Brown, 2017, p. 2).

To encourage and support African American women in the academy, Collins (1986) espoused that Black female intellectuals who are in touch with their marginality in academic settings can produce a distinctive analysis of class, race, and gender due to their position. She used the term "the outsider within" to reference this unique position (p. 14). The use of BFT as a framework allowed me to assess the social, cultural, and academic gains from positions of marginality that are corollary to oppression (Collins, 1986). hooks (2000) stated that worldviews and resilience strategies must be articulated and named to provide a sustained blueprint for change. Using BFT enabled me to name Black women's experiences and oppositional worldviews in counselor education programs at HWIs that are absent in scholarly text (hooks, 1989; Rodriguez, 2006).

Definition of Key Terms

Black refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. Black and non-Hispanic. In this study, the term *Black* is synonymous with African-American.

Counselor educator refers to an individual with a Ph.D. in counselor education or a faculty member enrolled in a counselor education program and involved in scholarship and service.

Historically White institution (HWI), in this study, "refers to a college or university founded on the principles of serving the White male socially elite" (Boatswain, 2022, p. 15). Thus, HWIs do not have much of a history serving minority students. Furthermore, a HWI is an institution of higher education in the United States that historically excluded and/or limited large numbers of Black students from enrollment prior to 1964 and whose current population is at least 50% White.

Oppression, according to Hardiman et al. (2007), refers to the following:

An interlocking, multileveled system that consolidates social power to the benefit of members of privileged groups and is maintained and operationalized on three dimensions: (a) contextual dimension, (b) conscious/unconscious dimension, and (c) applied dimension. (p. 39)

Predominantly White institution (PWI), in this study, refers to two-year or four-year higher education institutions in which 50% or more of the student enrollment is classified as White or Caucasian (Bourke, 2016).

Racism is a system of oppression that disadvantages individuals/groups who are not a part of the dominant race while advantaging those of the dominant racial group (White = dominant); race, in this context, is understood as a social construction crafted and maintained by societal, institutional, and individual practices, behaviors, and attitudes (Castañeda & Zùñiga, 2013).

Sexism is "a system of oppression that serves to privilege men, subordinate women, disparage women-identified standards and practices, enforce male dominance and control, and reinforce norms of masculinity that are dehumanizing and damaging to men" (Botkin et al., 2007, p. 174).

Tenure is "a status granted after a trial period to a teacher that gives protection from summary dismissal" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2024, para. 1).

Assumptions

Given the lack of literature on this subject, I was left to imagine what was happening to the BWCE at HWI, who were striving and maybe thriving on the tenured track. All I had were some anecdotal narratives acquired through listening to BWCE at a conference and what I had experienced in my own college as a student. Thus, I hypothesized that White spaces, places, and some people utilize and invoke their privilege and status against Black women. White tears, the check in the knapsack, and the White male standard of truth pigeonholed BWCEs on the tenure route at both primarily White institutions and historically White institutions. I also considered how, who, and in what context were the negative images of Black women used to influence how they were perceived as counselor educators, thus justifying the subjection to undesirable treatment. I further thought that sisterhood and mentoring served as resilient and resistant strategies toward achieving tenure, but more importantly, I wondered what that looked like across the nation. Because Black women are diverse in their experiences and nature, and when you couple that with geography, I thought it would feel and taste similar but look and sound different, yet leave an amazing taste in the mouths of the women who would share their beautifully expressed narratives.

Delimitations

This study focused on the voices of tenured BWCEs at HWI across the nation to acquire knowledge to impact the academe by establishing equitable policies and procedures and change the views and actions of institutions, such as the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). This qualitative research, highlighted as a phenomenological study, was conducted through the framework of BFT.

This research further supported Dillard (2010), who argued that what is real and credible should be determined by the experiences of the oppressed and championed for an alternative epistemology of knowledge production and validation. With this understanding, it is appropriate to note that BWCEs teach at other institutions outside of an HWI, and while their stories and understandings can be as powerful, they were not included in the study. Further, the request, which is at the beginning of a semester, may have negatively impacted participation because most scholars are often engaged in supervision, writing, teaching, presenting advocacy, or at some point with a student or a research topic at the beginning of the semester. Many of them serve as chairs of student dissertations and hold critical positions on the boards of professional organizations. This does not include the investment of time getting to know the students and their needs. Thus, their time is split in numerous ways with minimal margins while they renegotiate their schedule for success.

Chapter Summary

bell hooks wrote *Ain't I a Woman* in 1981 as a soliloquy to Sojourner Truth's speech in 1851. They both spoke of the misconstrued way people see Black women as coping with oppression because either they do not realize or care enough to consider how the oppression must be overcome for transformation to occur. BWCEs should have the opportunity to transform higher education institutions, specifically HWIs. Listening to the lived experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at historically White institutions can lead to understanding how they conquered the marginalization, microaggressions, tokenism, isolation, sexism, racism, and negative tropes to become tenured. The information shared will become a way to increase the data from 2019, noting the 2,519 African Americans who earned doctorate degrees (1,619 identified as women), and add to the number of those Black women becoming tenured counselor

educators. These voices will further speak to the awareness needed for the balanced and intentional hiring of Black women in academia on the tenure track at HWIs. The shared experiences will highlight the need for research that pronounces how BWCEs are the geography of place wherever they go. I used Black feminist thought as the theoretical framework for this study in order to center the voices as BWCEs shared their lived experiences.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to Black women counselor educators (BWCEs) and their experiences obtaining tenure at historically White institutions (HWIs). The current study paid specific attention to the various academic barriers encountered by BWCEs, how they overcame the challenges specific to them as Black women, and how they created a place for themselves in the academy as tenured educators who contribute to the spaces of higher learning. According to Brooks and Steen (2012), Grant (2012), and Bradley and Holcomb-McCoy (2004), minorities in the realm of education experience decreased representation in higher education. Data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2021) show that professors of color make up 30% of the overall faculty, but only 10% of tenured professors are people of color. Of that 10%, 3.7% are Black. About 41% of all faculty are tenured, but among Black faculty, the percentage of those tenured is lower.

Within doctoral education, women and students of color from the United States are less likely than men and White students to complete the doctorate (Posselt, 2016). Additionally, African-American and Latino students earn degrees at rates less than expected, given their representation in the general population (Posselt, 2016). Historically, women and people of color are severely underrepresented in the doctoral and professional ranks. This is either by choice or due to the social climate within a discipline (Weidman et al., 2001).

Despite the increasing ethnic diversity in the U.S. population and higher education student population, college campuses across the United States have been unsuccessful in diversifying the racial and ethnic makeup of their faculty. In 2005, faculty of color made up only 17% of total full-time faculty, with 7.5% Asian, 5.5% Black, 3.5% Hispanic, and 0.5% American

Indian (Turner et al., 2008, p. 140). Ten years later, those percentages have increased minimally. In 2017, 6% of full-time faculty were Asian/Pacific Islander males, Black females, and Hispanic males, and 2% were Hispanic females. American Indian/Alaska Natives and those of two races each made up 1% or less. These percentages are well below the ethnic demographics of the United States population.

Black female doctoral students and faculty in numerous higher education programs are distinctively unlike other minority groups (Henfield et al., 2011) because they face instances of racism and discrimination associated with identifying as both Black and female (Coker, 2011: Hyde & Kling, 2001: Thomas et al., 2002). An increasing body of literature focuses on the experiences of culturally diverse female faculty and presents a wealth of evidence of the severe systemic disadvantages they face as a result of racism and sexism in gaining tenure and advancement in predominately White institutions (PWIs) (Behar-Horenstein et al., 2012).

Davies et al. (2002) presented evidence suggesting that the work of culturally diverse female faculty is more highly criticized than their White counterparts due to gender- and race-based stereotypes about their abilities. The threat of being personally reduced to a stereotype based on one's cultural affiliation can raise disruptive apprehensions among women who know they are being evaluated (Goff et al., 2008). According to the literature, several factors adversely impact the career progression of BWCEs, such as (a) isolation (McCray, 2011; Salazar, 2005), hidden rules, and supplemental but unspoken expectations during tenure review (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002), (b) less favorable judgments of their work compared to their White counterparts (Williams & Williams, 2006), (c) lack of or minimal opportunities for research collaboration (Patitu & Hinton, 2003), and (d) little or no mentoring (Alexander & Moore, 2008).

Women in the Academy

Historically, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of government data, women have earned more degrees than men in the United States. However, they continue to lag behind men in receiving tenure positions in the academe. Although women hold numerous non-tenure track lecturer and instructor positions across institutions, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) reported only 44% are tenure-track faculty, and 36% are full professors (Palmer, 2023). The underrepresentation of women of color in higher education faculty and staff positions "contributes to lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching practices, curriculum, as well as role models and support systems" (AAUW, n.d., para. 2). For example, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reported in 2020 that "underrepresented minority faculty members make up only 12.9% of full-time faculty members in the U.S., despite making up 32.6% of the general population" (Colby & Fowler, 2020, p. 3). Specifically, "only 5.2% of full-time faculty members self-identify as Hispanic or Latino" (Colby & Fowler, 2020, p. 10), although the percentage of adults ages 24 to 64 in the United States self-identify as Hispanic/Latino is 17.5 percent. In addition, of the 12.7% self-identified Black/ African Americans in the United States, less than half (6.0%) are full-time faculty members (Colby & Fowler, 2020).

In the context of leadership, Wrighting et al. (2022) discovered, "Despite receiving 50% of doctoral degrees since 2006, there is a progressive decline in the number of women in the professoriate, such that women comprise fewer than 30% of upper-level leadership positions" (p. 19). Similarly, the Annual Report of the Economic Status of the Profession 2017-2018 revealed that women only comprise around 30% of the college board of directors. The AAUW (n.d.) reported, "Women are still paid less than men at every faculty rank and in most positions within

institutional leadership, with higher education administrators experiencing around a 20% gender pay gap and college presidents having a pay gap less than 10%" (para. 2). Furthermore, "only 5% of college presidents are racial or ethnic minority women (AAUW, n.d., para. 3)

Many key advancement opportunities in higher education professions often coincide with women's childbearing years, including graduate school, post-doctoral fellowships, tenure review, and publishing pressures, which can limit women's consideration for positions and women seeking those positions at those times. Families with two academics may also face the two-body problem — the extreme difficulty of finding two tenure-track jobs within commuting distance of each other. Only 15% of tenure-track engineering faculty are women, and only 14% of computer science tenure-track faculty are women. These numbers indicate that the lack of female tenure-track faculty spans programs.

Black Women in The Academy

Black women have made tremendous gains in higher education; however, several obstacles and barriers remain regarding their career satisfaction, professional development, advancement, and mentorship opportunities. During slavery, Black women were not allowed to read or write. Education was also deemed unnecessary for Black women. However, despite this prohibition, people like Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Jane Patterson, Lucy Diggs Slowe, Anna Julia Cooper, Lucy Lanny, and Fanny Jackson Coppin forged forward in educating themselves and others. Oberlin College in Ohio is cited as the first college in the United States to admit Blacks and women. Mary Jane Patterson was the first official Black woman graduate who earned a bachelor's degree in 1862. Patterson became the first Black female principal at the Prep School for African Americans in Washington, DC. Also, Mytilla Minor and Harriet Beecher Stowe

founded the Minor Teachers College for Black women in the late 1850s (Rankin, 1998). Before the Civil War, women and Blacks were excluded from higher education institutions.

Literature focused on Black women faculty navigating beyond the concrete ceiling (Hayes, 2006; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999) has emerged across academic disciplines (Griffin, Bennett, & Harris, 2013; Howard-Baptiste & Harris, 2014), specifically in the areas of law (González, 2014) and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Blackburn, 2017; McGee & Bentley, 2017; Ong, Smith, & Ko, 2018). However, little research examines Black women's faculty experiences, specifically within the academic discipline of counselor education at PWIs. Several researchers indicated a need to examine gendered and racial/ethnic faculty experiences around tenure expectations (Lisnic et al., 2018), cultural taxation at work (Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011), teaching evaluations' influences on advancement (Griffin et al., 2013), and stressors, productivity, and promotion (Eagan & Garvey, 2015). Illuminating the experiences of Black faculty can help identify supportive policies and programs that reduce their racial oppression at PWIs (Pittman, 2012). Moreover, gender and cultural diversity are essential to colleges and university's intellectual health (Evans, 2008), so institutions must examine Black women faculty experiences to support their recruitment, retention, and success.

While Black faculty frequently report that they are stereotyped because of their race, Black women are marginalized for being Black and women (Beal, 2008; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2008). Black women continue to experience historical stereotypes such as Mammy, Jezebel, and the Sapphire, images that are degrading depictions of Black women (Brown & Dancy, 2013; Collins, 2000; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Eck, 2018; Harris-Perry, 2013; Howard-Baptiste, 2014). These stereotypes and other biases decrease the ability of Black women in academia to be recognized as actual members of the organizational culture (Barnes, 2017).

Kelliher (2021), who noted the challenges Black women encounter when attempting to acquire tenured teaching tracks, highlighted the discrepancies faced by Black women with a particular or various research focus regarding their successes and environment. It further stated that many high-achieving women in academia often feel professionally inadequate, a well-known pattern called the imposter phenomenon. Nevertheless, research on this and other Black women's challenges typically centered around the individual, not the environment (Kelliher, 2021). The article reveals a concern for Black women in higher education. More specifically, it expressed the need to explore how the environment (HWIs) of Black women can lend itself to experiences where the phenomenon of Black women can support the utilization of their voice to build resilience in an otherwise hostile environment of higher education at HWIs.

It is challenging to recruit and retain Black female faculty in counseling programs (Bradley, 2005). However, Black females continue to triumph over workplace difficulties of ridicule, marginalization, sabotage, alienation, isolation, and lack of information from department colleagues (Jones et al., 2015; Owens, 2016). Scholars recommend paralleling narratives across multiple dimensions of identity by examining how race and gender intersect to impact experiences (Griffin et al., 2011). Additionally, open dialogue between faculty and administrators is recommended to strengthen institutional obligations to racial diversity and allow for recruiting and retaining female Faculty of Color (Beard & Julion, 2016). Barnes (2017) wrote that Black women are often placed in leadership roles subject to the "glass cliff" or in roles where they are at a higher risk of failure. Harris (2012) argued that providing empathy, support, and check-ins for faculty of color would be beneficial. Additionally, she encouraged readers to be agents of change in support of the faculty of color. Further understanding the experiences of Black female faculty would allow for the creation of strategies to support them effectively.

Using resilience, Black women in higher education have overcome stereotypes and multilayered intersectional discrimination and pushed past organizational oppressions such as limited and inadequate role models, the concrete ceiling, and intra-racial bias. These challenges are merely speed bumps on the road to success for this group. They are diligently driven to climb the ranks within higher education, specifically in counselor education. Resilience, social support, mentoring, and leadership development contribute to their ability to lift as they climb.

Black Women Counselor Educators

In counselor education programs, the barriers to tenure and promotion for Black faculty have substantial racial implications (Behar-Horenstien et al, 2012). Specifically, Black female faculty are given fewer opportunities for collaborative research than their White female counterparts (Bradley, 2005). Bradley and Holcomb-McCoy (2004) found that Black faculty believed they had immoderate service obligations related to diversity from their department and college. In addition, they asserted that prior studies found that White colleagues articulated a lack of appreciation for culture-centered research. Furthermore, the research showed that Black faculty in Counseling Education programs often characterized their promotion and tenure process as having racist elements. Workplace issues identified as barriers to the promotion and tenure for Black faculty include lack of personal time, institutional climate, review/promotion process, marginalization of research, lack of mentoring, and covert discrimination (Frazier, 2011). These barriers to tenure and promotion serve to disrupt the ability of faculty of color to perform in their roles satisfactorily and impact their socialization towards promotion and tenure (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Thompson, 2008). In addition, academic bullying has also served to limit faculty of color in their ability to attain tenure and promotion on traditional campuses

(Frazier, 2011). In a discussion of the historical mistreatment of Black academics, Martin et al. (2019) concluded, "Black professors have endured bullying from within and outside the academy" (p. 3).

Women's Tenure Experiences

Some researchers found that women are less likely to be familiar with the criteria for promotion and tenure, potentially resulting from inadequate or insufficient mentoring. Others report that faculty on traditional tenure tracks are more likely to be promoted and that men are likelier than women to hold tenure-track positions. Implicit bias on the part of promotion and tenure committees may favor men, and criteria for tenure may be based on stereotypically masculine traits and behaviors, such as leadership. These diverse factors may combine and have compounding effects. Without accounting for the difference in department, women made up 49.6% of academic instructors in 2017 (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2020).

However, although the rate of women teaching in higher education is similar, there is a vast difference when this figure is divided by academic rank. Parker (2015) showed that in 2015, women made up only 25% of full professors and only 14% of "presidents, provosts, and chancellors" (p. 9). In the 2020-2021 academic year, men outnumbered women in the highest academic ranks for undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral-level education (American Association of University Professors, 2021). Winchester and Browning (2015) found that in the 2000s, women represented around 40% of academic staff but only 20% of senior academic staff. Burkinshaw and White (2017) explained that women in higher education leadership are more likely to experience othering, a feeling of not fully belonging, and more likely to be "affected by heavy workloads… due to the precariousness of their contracts" (p. 3).

Black Women's Tenure Experiences

When the lived experiences of Black women are censored by using language to disqualify their knowledge because it promotes their power, the outcomes are associated with the faces of oppression through racism, sexism, and classism (Bobo et al., 1997). Black women also experience discrimination in other ways, such as microaggressions, stereotype threats, the glass ceiling, glass cliff, and the concrete wall, as experienced by Hannah Nicole Jones and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The mismanagement of power by the Board of Trustees left her untenured and publicly humiliated. Jones (as cited in Legal Defense Fund, 2021) stated,

> I cannot imagine working at and advancing a school named for a man who lobbied against me, who used his wealth to influence the hires and ideology of the journalism school, who ignored my 20 years of journalism experience, all of my credentials, all of my work because he believed that a project that centered Black Americans equaled the denigration of White Americans. (p. 4)

Ybarra (2021) contended, "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" (p. 2). She added that this practice facilitated policies at HWIs "that serve to maintain the status quo, creating a hostile work environment for Black faculty seeking employment at these institutions" (Ybarra, 2021, p. 2).

Jones (as cited in Legal Defense Fund, 2021) further stated,

> How could I believe I would be able to exert academic freedom with the school's largest donor so willing to disparage me publicly and attempt to pull the strings behind the

scenes? Why would I want to teach at a university whose top leadership chose to remain

silent, refuse transparency, and fail to publicly advocate that I be treated like every

Knight Chair before me? (p. 4)

While this speaks to journalism and not counselor education, it demonstrates the problem of

Black women in the tenured process not being successful and respected for their experiences and

knowledge. It further supports the barriers that feed the limited number of tenured Black women

in academia.

Although the existence of Black female counselor education faculty has increased over

time, the field is still dominated by White counselor education faculty. Black females represent

approximately 15% of the student population in counselor education doctoral programs. In 2020,

the U.S. Census Bureau reported only 6% of college and university faculty were Black (Ybarra,

2021). Further, 5% of Black women faculty held tenured positions compared to 76% of White

women faculty, and only 6% were on the tenure track compared to 67% of White women faculty.

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).

Outcomes associated with racism and other forms of marginalization are evident in racial

enrollment trends in counselor preparation programs, racial demographics of professional

counselors in the American workforce, and racial demographics of counselor educators teaching

in counselor preparation programs (CACREP, 2018; United States Bureau of Labor Statistics,

2021). For example, CACREP reported in 2018 that approximately 60% of masters and 55% of

doctoral students in their accredited programs identified as White, less than 20% identified as

Black, less than 8% identified as Hispanic or Latinx, and approximately 2% identified as Asian

American. CACREP (2018) also reported that close to 72% of full-time faculty identified as

White, 15% as Black, and less than 5% as Asian American or Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish American, respectively. The professional counseling workforce mirrors enrollment trends by race in counselor preparation programs. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) reported that approximately 76% of mental health counselors were White, 17% were Black, 10% were Latinx, and 2% were Asian. These trends are similar across other counseling specialties. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) reported that White counselors comprised approximately 70%, 74%, and 65% of addiction, educational/career counselors, and others, respectively.

Essentially, it is safe to assume that an even smaller percentage of Black faculty are female and have obtained tenure. To address these concerns, counselor education programs must understand what Black female faculty need to be successful during their training and employment as counselor educators (Allen et al., 1991; Grant, 2012; Thomas et al., 2009). Dr. Martin Luther King's (1968) address to the American Psychological Association (APA) entitled "The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement." In his remarks, Dr. King (1968) challenged behavioral scientists to be truth tellers regarding racism and the impact of racism in America. Furthermore, his speech was a call to action for mental health professionals to acknowledge the limited number of Black people in leadership roles (Hannon et al., 2022), to become politically involved in the cause for human rights, and to challenge the pervasive and dominant perspective of White superiority that has been intentionally oppressive in brutalizing Black bodies, minds, and souls.

Like American society, the world of academia is dominated by the White majority. According to Shaw and Stanton (2012), "Women and many racial and ethnic minorities are underrepresented in academia relative to their proportion in the general population" (p. 3736).

Many Black and other minority students enter predominantly White institutions in their respective degree programs with the possibility of no minority faculty (Holcomb-McCoy & Addison-Bradley, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007). As a result, the students receive less cross-group interaction, enhanced classroom discussions, stronger communities, and the workplace, and enhanced personal growth- a healthy society and a more economically competitive America (Morris & Grbic, 2015).

Black Women's Resiliency

By situating this study in BFT (Black feminist thought), I aimed to capture the resilience and resistance strategies unique to BWCE employed at HWIs (Historically White institutions) who had experienced the tenure process. Resiliency is a form of positive adaptation through adverse experiences and dimensions (Erving et al., 2020). The American Psychological Association (2018) described resilience as "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands" (para. 1). Morris (2016) addressed the idea that Black women and their physical vulnerability, when connected to resiliency, are psychological spaces where Black women in younger years are told and taught to be strong, and this mindset continues in adulthood as a protective factor. Black women have learned to redirect the emotional assaults experienced in various aspects of their lives and the attempts to trap them into accepting the establishment's meanings as substandard (Collins, 2000). Nichols et al., 2015 suggest that Black women have almost a sixth sense of resiliency when exposed to challenging experiences.

Resilience looks different for all people; in the face of trauma, adversity, and the stress of life, developing and maintaining resilience has helped Black women get through difficult

experiences and promote personal and professional growth. According to the National Center for Trauma Informed Care, resiliency refers to those protective factors and positive adaptations a person makes in adverse situations. BWCE who have obtained tenure at HWIs are provided job security and academic freedom. With tenure, they are not as worried about job security for teaching the wrong thing or saying the wrong thing or because somebody does not like what they are researching. Considering the small number of those BWCEs, this is an opportune time for other BWCEs to listen.

Chapter Summary

Throughout this literature review, I underscored what is known and unknown about the experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at HWIs. A significant shortcoming of the existing literature is the conflation between oppression and the covenants of relationships among and within Black women in a varied form and representation that supports their upward mobility and assures their success in an "imperialist White supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 2004, p. 17). Consequently, much of the existing literature on the lived experiences of tenured and Black women is extrapolated from research in areas outside of counselor education.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research process requires researchers to serve as the data collection instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdall, 2015). The researcher is situated within the research and is an extricable part of the process. Therefore, qualitative researchers must practice reflexivity throughout the research process to acknowledge their positionality and potential effects on the research (Berger, 2015; Suzuki et al., 2007).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research is a process of studying things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (p. 3). Furthermore, using qualitative research methods allows researchers to provide an in-depth exploration of lived experiences and helps multiculturally competent counselor–researchers highlight gaps in counseling literature and inequities in counseling practices to advocate for systemic changes in the counseling profession (Hays & Singh, 2012; Ratts et al., 2016). For this reason, I chose to use a qualitative approach to studying Black women at historically White institutions (HWI) as a counselor educator.

Qualitative research sheds light on understanding in such a way as to guide increased knowledge about a particular narrative. What matters most is the quality of the insights, not the quantity (Patton, 2002). Its multidisciplinary lineage prevents the creation of an umbrella or catch-all definition. Thus, qualitative research is the quest to discover meaning within a particular narrative or story with a specific concern for the story's nuances to deepen meaning and understanding (Clemons, 2019). Qualitative research can be organized in several forms, including case studies, narrative inquiry, phenomenologically grounded theory, action research,

and ethnography. All qualitative research employs a similar data collection process, including (in varying degrees) interviews, observation, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Research Design

To better understand the research questions, a qualitative phenomenological research design explores participants' lived experiences regarding a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). A qualitative, exploratory approach to research is warranted when there is a "need to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 45). Therefore, a qualitative, phenomenological approach is appropriate to better understand the lived experiences of tenured Black Women counselor educators at historically White institutions.

To further understand the lived experiences of Black women at an HWI, a qualitative approach will be used in this study. According to Maxwell (2005), qualitative helps one understand the particular context within which the participants live, and the influence that this context has on their actions. Using a qualitative methodology provides an opportunity to gather detailed descriptions of the participants' lives while considering the influence of the institutional context (Stage & Manning, 2003).

Phenomenology

To highlight the participants' experiences and tell their stories, this research is situated within the phenomenology tradition (Creswell, 2009). Phenomenological research comes from the philosophy of phenomenology, or the understanding of lived experience (Finlay, 2009). A central tenet of phenomenology is that the individual and the world are inextricably connected

(Finlay, 2009; Young, 2017). Phenomenology describes particular phenomena, or the appearance of things, as lived experience (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Thus, the researcher must not aim to separate the individual and the world but examine them together as they relate to the phenomenon.

Phenomenology is a way of viewing the world (philosophy) and a method of inquiry (research methodology) about lived experiences. From a philosophical perspective, Edmund Husserl's conceptions of intentionality lie at the very center of the methodology. Intentionality requires that we become aware of ourselves and our existence in the world and recognize that we and the world are inseparable components of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality contains two concepts the noesis and the noema. The noesis refers to the act of reflecting, feeling, and judging - the experience itself. Noema is the perceptual meaning of the experience and what is meant by the experience. Wherever there is noesis, there is noema. This study used the notions of noesis and noema to make sense of the data by having participants reflect upon and make meaning of their experiences as Black women in the Counseling Education profession. From a methodological perspective, phenomenological research asks the central question of what the experience is like. It is a systematic attempt to uncover lived experiences' meaning and describe and interpret them with richness and depth. It is the search for what it means to be human. Phenomenology considers the sociocultural and historical traditions that have shaped our ways of being. It considers what it means to live in the world as a man or woman. (Van Manen, 1990) This study engages the use of Phenomenology as the methodology because it allows me, as the researcher, to look at what it means to be a Black woman in the Counselor Educator professoriate while considering sociocultural and historical traditions

Lived experiences involve the immediate consciousness of life's events before reflection and without interpretation and are influenced by those things that are internal or external to them.

The lived experience gives meaning to each individual's perception of a particular phenomenon and thus presents to the individual what is true or accurate in his or her life (Giorgi, 1997). To preserve the participant's life world, phenomenological researchers are to practice epoche or bracketing their own experiences (Finlay, 2009; Young, 2017). The goal of epoche is for the researcher to set aside their preconceived ideas about the phenomenon being examined not to distort the data and to preserve the participants' perspective and experience. Epoche should be practiced before and throughout the research process.

Phenomenological research aims to highlight and report the essence of the experience within a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Finlay, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Young, 2017). The researcher aims to convey what the participants experienced and how they experienced it. The essence is understood through the direct reporting of the participants and is a detailed and meaningful description of how individuals experience a specific phenomenon. It is the product of collecting and analyzing rich data obtained directly from the participants.

A phenomenological analysis does not aim to explain or discover causes. Instead, its goal is to clarify the meanings of phenomena from lived experiences. As such, phenomenology offers a critical shift from a positivist cause-effect focus to one of human subjectivity and discovering the meaning of actions (Giorgi, 2005). Phenomenology practiced within a human science perspective can thus result in valuable knowledge about individuals' experiences.

This phenomenological study aims to understand and describe the lived experiences of Black women counselor educators at HWI and understand their pathway to their identified success. Aligned with Black Feminism Theory, the study's design aims to centralize Black women's voices and experiences to reflect Black women's standpoint accurately. I employ a descriptive phenomenological approach to respond to the research question:

> • What are the experiences of tenured Black women Counselor Educators in CACREP-
>
> accredited counseling programs at historically White institutions (HWIs)?

Descriptive Phenomenology

Given the aims underlying each of the significant phenomenological approaches, using a descriptive phenomenological approach is best suited to examining the experiences of Black women in the academe. This approach is especially appropriate considering the lack of research examining this particular cohort of academics and the need for a fundamental understanding of their lived experience. However, it is essential to note that numerous methodological approaches within descriptive phenomenology can be used to conduct the study. The methodological guidelines chosen should reflect the descriptive phenomenological approach determined as appropriate for this type of study. Spiegelberg (1975), an American philosopher whose work was primarily influenced by Husserl's philosophical perspective of descriptive phenomenology, offered one of many methodological interpretations of this approach. Specifically, he identified three steps for carrying out descriptive phenomenology: The first step is intuiting; this phase involves phenomenological seeing, described as "opening one's eyes," "keeping them open," "not getting blinded," and "looking and listening." In this step, the researcher begins by trying to grasp the phenomenon's uniqueness by comparing it to related phenomena and examining similarities and differences. The second step is analyzing: at this stage, the researchers identify the meaning of the phenomenon that has been excavated and explore the relationships and connections between the data and the existing phenomenon. The essential data are then analyzed carefully (Spiegleberg, 1982). Thus, the researchers get the data needed to ensure a pure and potent image. The third step is phenomenological describing: researchers communicate and provide a written description of the critical elements based on the classification and clustering

phenomenon. The purpose of this phase is to communicate the meaning and significance of the experience. Therefore, a descriptive phenomenological approach that is informed by both the philosophical views proposed in the phenomenological work of Husserl and the methodological interpretations developed by Spiegelberg would accurately serve to examine the lived experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at historically White institutions.

In the descriptive method, the researcher makes no interpretations. Instead, they analyze the descriptions given by participants and divide them into meaning-laden statements, gathering those meanings that are essential to the construct of the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, the researcher can bring a written description of the structure of the phenomenon of interest. A descriptive phenomenological approach is used when little is known about an issue, and the aim of the study is to make clear and understand the essential meaning of a phenomenon of interest from the perspective of those directly involved in it (Giorgi, 1997).

The philosophical underpinnings of Husserlain phenomenology are that of the lived human experience. As such, he sought to reinstate the human world as a foundation of science that brought justice to the everyday lived experience- the going to the things themselves (Olafson, 1957). In descriptive phenomenological studies, researchers use participants' responses to describe everyday experiences that capture the "intentionality" (perception, thought, memory, imagination, and emotion) related to the phenomenon under study (Giorgi, 2009). A descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design is suitable for scholars to examine the lived experiences of individuals within their sociocultural context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Giorgi, 2009).

Theoretical Lens: Black Feminist Thought

To better understand Black women counselor educators' cultural strengths and resiliency strategies at historically White institutions (HWIs), it is essential to examine their work experiences using a Black feminist framework. Black feminism addresses the intersection of race, gender, class, ability, sexuality, and citizenship for Black women. Black women offer an alternative position that reveals a representation of others from a distinct perspective. Collins (2009) stated that Black feminist thought (BFT) is an outgrowth of Black feminist literature that centralizes Black women's perspective of themselves, their families, and society. (Collins, 2009). Black female intellectuals frequently reference BFT as a framework when conducting research to transform Eurocentric patriarchal and classist practices in U.S. higher education (Collins, 1986; Grant, 2012; Henry et al., 2011; Howard- Hamilton, 2003; Rodriguez, 2006; Suhl, 2009).

BFT is a lens through which researchers recognize this as a political stance committed to making sure the work is self-reflexive. Researchers must answer personally and professionally: "What's my investment in this research?" or as Alice Walker (1972, p. 409) proffered, "What is the work my soul must have?" Madison (2005) wrote extensively on positionality and stressed the importance of being vulnerable and transparent to judgment and evaluation. When engaging in BFT, scholars must have a cozy relationship with theory. By comfort, the researcher must commit to wrestling with uncomfortable ideas even amid struggle and confusion.

One must understand the unique standpoint of Black women at the university level to encourage and support them in the academy. Sociologist and architect of Black feminist thought Patricia Hill Collins (2000) identified four tenets of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology: (a) lived experience as a criterion of meaning explains how an individual knows what they know through episodes they have encountered within their life; (b) the use of dialogue as something

that establishes bonds and relationships among Black women, which may lead to empowerment; (c) the ethic of caring; and (d) the ethics of personal accountability. Each of the tenets aids in helping the researcher understand the interviewee as a participant with agency and history. The theoretical framework is unique in that it puts Black women at the center of analyses, allows them to tell their unwavering stories as they experience them, and acknowledges the need for Black women to self-define as a means of empowerment and activism (Collins, 2000; Henry & Glenn, 2009; Taylor, 1998).

BFT and Phenomenology

With this understanding, the BFT tenets are compatible with a phenomenological design to fully capture each participant's experience. The phenomenological design allows for interpersonal interactions and opportunities for in-depth understanding through the contributors' insight and blockades (Patton, 2014). Black feminist thought empowers this focus and is women-centered. Together, they empower the contributor to be the expert in their life based on their lived experiences and what they know because the researchers' role is sometimes bracketed, allowing them to be present and establish trust. The pairing of BFT and Phenomenology will allow tenured Black women, professors at a historically White institution, to voice their unique experiences and allow for particular constituents to be categorized for a complete analysis of their lived experiences and possible connections without being in the position of the outsider within.

In "*The Outsider Within the Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought*," Collins (1986) purported that the political purpose of BFT is located within the struggle for and the continuation of self-definition, self-validation, and self-worth. By centering the self with their research, Black women rearticulate subjugated knowledge into "specialized knowledge" and

thereby generate new alternative theories and epistemologies that empower the lives of Black women. Collins (1990) explained the fusion of experience, reflection, and political awareness that constitutes Black women's specialized knowledge:

> Black feminist thought stimulates new consciousness that utilizes Black women's every day, taken-for-granted knowledge. Rather than raising consciousness, Black feminist thought affirms, rearticulates, and provides a vehicle for publicly expressing a consciousness that quite often already exists. Most importantly, this rearticulated consciousness aims to empower African American women and stimulate resistance. (p. 32)

Theorists believe that the degree to which individuals experience incongruence creates internal tension or conflict, a form of anxiety characterized by denying or distorting experiences that contradict one's self-concept (Rogers, 1980). This incongruence is also assessed in Black feminist thought through knowledge production, matrix of oppression, negative historical images of Black women, and the connection to public policy (Collins, 2000). This speaks to the purpose of BFT enhancing the voice of Black women to create their standpoint and transfer information to other Black women necessary for survival.

According to Mary Howard-Hamilton (2003), one of several scholars who championed Black feminist thought as a framework when studying Black women, there are three major themes in BFT. The first component of the framework is built upon the experiences Black women have encountered in their lives. This is especially important, considering others have created the narrative for Black women for many years. The narratives of Black women tend to be inaccurate and marred with stereotypes. Secondly, while there is diversity in the stories and experiences women bring, there are intersections of experiences between and among Black

women. Lastly, although there are commonalities, there is diversity in our socioeconomic status, religion, age, and sexual orientation that makes our experience wholly ours. Collins (2001) advocated that Black American women in the academy differ in their experiences, backgrounds, appearances and educational levels, demographics, occupations, and beliefs. What connects them all is their struggle to be accepted and respected members of society and their desire to have a voice that can be heard in a world with many views (Collins, 2001, p. 29). This connection will not only facilitate a participatory approach to the development of supports and interventions for the success of a tenured Black woman in counselor education at an HWI but also create an immediate space where tenured Black women at HWIs can hear each other and be heard while listening to increase their knowledge of each other's lived experiences and build on their resiliency as a Black woman, a counselor educator, and an advocate.

Collins (1999) argued that race and gender are far from being the only significant identities that bigot discrimination toward Black women. The beliefs of meritocracy and colorblindness fallaciously deny race as affecting opportunity and experience (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004: Cornileus, 2013: Henfield et al., 2013: Holcomb-McCoy & Addison-Bradley, 2005: Wells, 1998). BFT values the knowledge Black women gain because of their life experiences and does not predicate the experiences of Black women on the experiences of dominant groups (Grant, 2012; Rodriques, 2006).

Audre Lorde (2007) reminded us that effective examination of the literature on Black women "requires that we be seen as whole people in our actual complexities . . . rather than as one of those problematic but familiar stereotypes provided in this society in place of genuine images of Black women" (p. 117).

Black women's narratives can be utilized in such a way where we see "whole people in our actual complexities." Employing such a methodological approach validates the lived experiences and particularities of Black women researchers, scholars, and participants.

The BFT framework and qualitative research in education are guided by a thorough understanding of the learning strategies informed by Black women's historical experiences with race, gender, and class. Utilizing the lens of BFT to synthesize the lived experiences, i.e., phenomenological experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at historically White institutions, will highlight their voices and add to the current literature.

Procedures

In phenomenological research, participant recruitment is purposeful and criterion-based (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). There is an intentional effort to recruit participants who meet a specific criterion (Palinkas et al., 2015). For this study, a purposeful sample will be acquired through flyers posted on social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) and email list sites such as Counselor Education and Supervision Network (CESNET), ACA (American Counseling Association), ACES (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision), SACES (Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision), and AMCD (Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development). Additionally, flyers will be shared with colleagues and peers for dissemination to particular groups and forums (i.e., Facebook groups *Women of Color in Counselor Education*, *Black Women in Higher Ed*). It will target areas where Black women Counselor Educators are highly populated and often congregate for information, support, and training. Purposeful sampling will be used to select participants who meet specific requirements for participation in this study.

Maxwell (2005) states that this is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that cannot be retrieved from other choices.

Participant recruitment included two phases. The first phase was "pre-election," and the second phase was "final selection." Once selected, the participant provided information where I introduced myself, the purpose of the study, the criterion upon which they were recruited, a copy of the consent form, the interview schedule, and the interview protocol. The requirements were as follows: Identity as a Black woman, tenure track professor in a CACREP (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) Counselor Education program at the associate or higher level, and employed at a historically White institution (HWI). This study was reviewed and received approval from the University of Georgia institutional review board before implementation.

Creswell (1998) advised recruiting up to 10 participants, Douglas (1985) recommended 25, and Seidman (1998) suggested choosing enough to reflect the range of participants that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it. Creswell and Poth (2017) noted that sample sizes could vary significantly in phenomenological research. However, participant samples ranging from as low as three to as great as 25 were the general recommendations by scholars. Other reviewed phenomenological studies varied significantly, ranging from 8 to 20 participants. Speziale and Carpenter (2007) found that sample sizes of 10 to 15 were adequate, provided participants can provide detailed descriptions of the phenomenon. There are multiple ways of determining the end of data collection in phenomenological research. Some researchers will participate in participant recruitment and data collection until data reaches saturation point (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). That is, recruitment and data collection stopped once no more new

information could be obtained. Other researchers will commit to obtaining data from a specific, predetermined number of participants. In this study, I attempted to recruit 8-10 participants or when the data saturation occurred, but due to challenges, I recruited six participants.

Data Collection

Phenomenological researchers aim to understand lived experience directly from the individual (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Finlay, 2009; Young, 2017). Therefore, the data was collected through individual in-depth interviews to understand their lived experiences better (Seidman, 2013). The goal of the phenomenological interview is "to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic of study" (Seidman, 2013, p. 14). The interviews ranged between 60-110 minutes each. The 10 semi-structured interview questions moved the conversation along and allowed for follow-up questions where appropriate. The collection of interviews was through the use of a recording device and Zoom. Zoom was the central platform for hosting interviews to overcome geographical barriers and time constraints (Gray et al.; 2020; Irani, 2019; Sedgwick, 2009). As communication technology, Zoom allows for a real-time, online synchronous conversation, with the ability to send and receive audiovisual information (Salmons, 2012). Compared with other online methods for qualitative data collection (i.e., email interviews, online forums, and instant messaging), videoconferencing resembles inperson qualitative interviews more closely (Tuttas, 2015).

As Black women create or validate knowledge, they should assume total responsibility and accountability for their standpoints or positions. The tenets of BFT are why it is decided to extend the investigation beyond one-on-one interviews with participants to fulfill the latter three out of four tenets: (a) lived experience as a criterion of meaning explains how an individual knows what they know through episodes they have encountered within their life (b) the use of

dialogue as something that establishes bonds and relationships among Black women; (c) the ethic of caring; and (d) the ethics of personal accountability. As a result, during the review of the transcripts, themes that encompass most of the participants' discussions were deciphered. Themes were allowed to emerge from the analysis and were identified beforehand. The research team validated the analysis. The team consisted of two second-year education doctoral students (along with the primary researcher) in counselor education with experience in qualitative research with a significant focus on analyzing how and why people think, believe, and behave a certain way. The team also reviewed the transcripts in their entirety to obtain consensus. They reviewed the transcript in areas where disagreements occurred about interpretation and brought in an advanced researcher when an agreement was not reached.

Different security measures were utilized to keep the collected data confidential. To promote client confidentiality, each client chose a pseudonym for the study. All interviews not conducted face-to-face took place within a HIPPA-compliant Zoom account. The researcher was in a private room using wireless headphones on a secure wireless connection to prevent unauthorized access to the interview events. Additional efforts were made to ensure confidentiality through a noise-canceling machine at the door of the room where the researcher resided. After consenting to be recorded, each participant engaged in the interview in a private and secure office/home setting utilizing wireless headphones/earbuds. The names of the participants were changed to pseudonyms for each transcript to prevent any identifying information from being inadvertently disclosed. The recordings and transcripts were stored on an encrypted computer and password-protected. The only person with access was the researcher.

The interviews were transcribed through the Zoom transcription services and manually processed to clean the interview data. There were no interviews conducted face-to-face, and therefore, none were outsourced for transcription through a professional transcription service.

Trustworthiness

To maintain study rigor, researchers strive to enhance credibility and trustworthiness in each data collection stage, analysis, and interpretation. Various methods to examine credibility and trustworthiness were adopted, including checking researcher biases (i.e., epoche), maintaining reflexive journals (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), conducting a debriefing interview with the interviewer (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2008), applying multiple rounds of data analysis, and establishing intercoder agreement through multiple research team discussions (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1984). This modification was supported through member check-in, a qualitative technique used to establish the tenet of credibility and trustworthiness. This process enabled the participants to review the data or results for accuracy and resonance with their experience at the end of the interviews (Finch & Lewis, 2003)

Data Analysis

Moustakas (1994) outlined multiple steps for phenomenological data analysis, including epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. After the audio files from the interviews were transcribed, the data from the interviews were analyzed using a general inductive approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological reduction approach for data analysis and data interpretation consists of multiple steps: (a) bracket out researcher biases (*epoche*), (b) *horizontalizing* to identify significant statements, (c) group statements into meaning units, (d) develop textural descriptions of the phenomenon, (e) develop

structural descriptions of the phenomenon to interpret its essence, and (f) present the essence of the phenomena in figures, tables, and text narratives with supported quotes from participants. By utilizing Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological reduction, themes were generated through numerous rounds of in vivo (Strauss, 1987) and descriptive coding (Miles et al., 2013) and data interpretation. The observation field notes were also considered supplemental and supportive. Therefore, the notes were used to vividly describe the Black woman's everyday discussions, actions, and experiences (Richie, 2003)

Phenomenological reduction is sorting the data and understanding the "what" of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). During the process, researchers began by horizontalizing the data or viewing all the data as equal and analyzing it for meaning. The reduction process began as the researcher removed redundant and unnecessary data. This process of reducing the data began to form horizons or groupings of interrelated data. These horizons informed the groupings that became themes within the data.

The analysis of the interview data began with open coding and then followed with axle coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It later involved some variation of in-vivo coding as the participants described their lived experiences. It was then that the importance of using their words to support the thematic unveiling became honorable. Open coding is a process in which the researcher forms initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied (Crossville, 1998). In vivo coding is a form of qualitative data analysis that places emphasis on the actual spoken words of participants. Although in vivo coding is probably the most common name for this form of coding, it is also referred to as verbatim coding, literal coding, and natural coding (Saldaña, 2016, as cited in Manning, 2017).While coding, I analyzed the emerging categories against the frameworks of Black feminist theory and the research questions. To begin

the process of open coding, I used a codebook. A codebook is a database that records and stores each code, definitions, and examples (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña, 2016). My codebook was maintained in Microsoft Word and hand charting.

The third step of phenomenological data analysis is imaginative variation, where the data is contextualized (Moustakas, 1994)—also described as the "how" of the data. An imaginative variation involves placing the data within settings and contexts. This process further highlights the world where the data resides, highlighting situational, temporal, and contextual factors surrounding the phenomenon. As stated previously, a central tenet to phenomenology is that the individual and the world are inextricably bound; the process of imaginative variation ensures that this tenet is observed within the data, highlighting the world in which the phenomenon occurs.

Synthesis is the final stage in phenomenological data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). In this stage, researchers synthesized the data obtained in the previous steps. By combining the "what" and "how" of the phenomenon being studied, the essence of the experience began to emerge. The product is an illustrative depiction of how the individual experiences the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Researcher Stance

Like American society, the world of academia is dominated by the White majority. According to Shaw and Stanton (2012), "Women and many racial and ethnic minorities are underrepresented in academia relative to their proportion in the general population" (p. 3736). Many Black and other minority students enter predominantly White institutions in their respective degree programs with the possibility of there being no minority faculty (HolcombMcCoy & Addison-Bradley, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007). Students who face these realities may find it difficult to adjust to their academic environment and maintain a positive

outlook while obtaining their degrees, seek comfort and advisement, communicate with non-minority faculty, and stay motivated (Thomas et al., 2009).

As a Black woman and a student at an HWI responding to these questions, I sought to approach the successful experiences of Black women at historically White institutions with reflexivity and great pause regarding their positionality (Patel, 2015). The purpose was to explore the successful lived experiences of Black women counselor educators at HWI's. The drive for engaging in such a topic derived from my negative experiences as a counselor educator student at an HWI and limited exposure to Black Faculty in such a setting to lessen the adverse understanding and a means to heal the hurt.

Having experienced micro-aggressions and many of the faces of oppression, such as marginalization, as a student, I thought much as Minda Harts did in her book *Right Within: How to Heal from Racial Trauma* (2021). You must acknowledge you have been hurt to heal. It was only in opening the questions and reading what was required or being asked to provide in a thorough outlay that the hurt was realized. It was harder to breathe and understand what was causing the visceral and debilitating emotional drain. I had not experienced that feeling in that way ever before and had no context for it. It all became a blur. Later, to avoid the intentional burden of those unlabeled thoughts and feelings, I evaded the writing process by telling myself that if I looked up literature that counts, the literature did not get read.

 The stress and strain were becoming real, and the shock was mounting. The resilience and the successful experiences that were thought to have been had could not stop the anxiety pursued each time the task was attempted. I was looking for a successful venture and trying to remember a positive and sustainable memory during my tenure in the program. Every semester after the Fall of 2020 was marked with experiences that reminded me of my Blackness and

womanhood. By the Fall of 2021, my nerves were so wrecked that anytime I showed up, it was an act of survival while I felt like I had worn some identifying marker that prevented a soft place to land. It was not until I recalled the words spoken to Sethe in Beloved, "We got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow. You, your own best thing, [Tonja], You are." Moreover, I thought to myself, if only there were at least two Black women in the Counselor Education program as faculty, then I would be able to talk about what I was feeling and not be afraid that the one would not somehow receive backlash about her support or understanding, as she would not be alone.

It was two weeks. Moreover, a therapy session or two was new for me before the questions opened again. Furthermore, I still cry. I cry for me, the student in my example, because I know a Black female student who is, has and will engage in an unwilling interaction that leaves them imbalanced in a way that scars them in such a traumatic manner. Additionally, I also believe that my ability to focus on myself and social justice promotion at educational institutions and create a research design model centered on the successful experiences of Black women counselor educators at HWI's will be a place that "gives our humanity breathing room" (Burke & Brown, 2021). That sustains the capacity for Black women to do what is asked of them and to do what is necessary for themselves without fears in academia. Thus, as a student and a Black woman, I will work hard to be as intentional as possible to answer each question with minimal bias, with unlaced critique, and as thorough as possible.

However, none of that worked as well as I had prayed it would. I continued to drown in my unnamed and unrecognizable bouquet of emotions. I was on autopilot, but more importantly, I was in a trauma trance. I unconsciously told myself to show up and smile through it. Say as little as possible, and do not piss anyone else off, for God's sake. Just pray and watch. Just typing

those words sounds so "Mammy," which is what one of the professors said to me as I was outwardly processing something one day. They commented, which felt like an inappropriate use of Socratic questioning, of me being that unsavory trope, "mammy."

These experiences prompted me to consider in what ways the lived experiences of Black women counselor educators at predominately White institutions stay and stay long enough to acquire tenure. As well as what that experience is like when they may be less understood, particularly as they relate to persistence in seeking to be tenured amid oppressive acts. My experiences as a K-12 administrator familiarized me with the isolation that "being at the top" can sometimes generate. As a Black woman, I know how my experiences are marginalized or tokenized in majority-White environments.

Researcher Reflexivity

During this study, I maintained a journal of my experience with and during the interviews. After each one, I took a walk to process the stories reenacted by each participant. Some of them had moments of silence filtering their stories because of the realizations that unfolded while talking; some had anger and then joy, and all had invaluable meaning. I did my best to stay in the role of researcher and honor the tenets of BFT, specifically the ethic of care, through the use of dialogue as I hung onto their every word about their lived experience, waiting for the phenomenon, the meaning to it all, for them and to land in spaces created just for their voice. Therefore, the interviews lasted longer and shorter for some participants because of the safety and intentionality placed on the ethic of care and empathy with them.

I also had this backdrop in my mind that the interview was a space for the participants to be brave and show up as their best and most complicated selves without judgment when the words became heavy. This was an opportunity for them to unfold within a trusted space that

allowed me to be an instrument of change on a person-person level. And then, in that process, come to a clearing about some things that may have been just kind of stuck in there, which is what some said happened to them. As a researcher, my goal was also to acquire information for the fulfillment of my dissertation. However, my gift back was for the person who was giving the information to feel empowered based on their awareness of self as the expert in their life based on their lived experiences.

Each story sounded like a song that was oh-so-familiar to them and me. Like *Stand by Me*, I was held captive by their smiles as they discussed their colleagues who showed up and offered a space for them to be brave. The opportunities to witness the indisputable contributions to the counseling profession as an educator and as a Black woman. The laughter caused their heads to fall back and, in a small way, comforted them, you know, *Just Me and My Girlfriends*. Then there were the times I held stories. They were laced with affirmations, triumphs, pride, resoluteness, and a reminder to always rise. This research was designed to highlight the positives that Black Women Counselor Educators experience in historically White spaces, and I hope I did that well enough. However, as Dr. Bailey said, you have to tell of the not-so-positive in order for the value to be underscored.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences to better understand the experiences of tenured Black women Counselor Educators in CACREP-accredited counseling programs in Historically White Institutions (HWIs). Furthermore, capturing these lived experiences allowed a richer understanding of the cultural strengths and resiliency strategies of those who successfully become tenured at historically White institutions (HWIs).

This chapter presents the findings through themes that emerged from the interviews of the six participants. They reflected and shared their lived experiences as tenured Black women counselor educators at their HWI. Their voice was obtained through semi-structured open-ended interviews. Specifically, the professors shared experiences of thriving through mentorship, sponsorship, collegiality, and community/space. Both purposeful and criterion-based sampling were used to ensure a pool of participants who met the descriptor criteria and had related experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The conceptual framework for this research study was Black feminist thought (BFT) (Collins, 2009). The themes emphasize the positive experiences and supports that played a pivotal role in these women's lives, allowing each to obtain tenure and reimagine their lives as a woman, a Black person, and a counselor educator at an HWI.

Participants

Each participant had worked in counselor education for at least nine years. In most cases, the counselor educators were the only Black person and the only Black woman within their department at the time of their arrival. All of them had been employed by at least two HWIs in their career as counselor educators. Five out of six were tenured at a southern HWI, and the other

was at a northern HWI. The counselor educators varied in their tenure experience, meaning that two had been tenured at an HBCU (historically Black college and university) before applying to their present HWI. Two had been tenured at an HWI before submitting their tenure application at their current HWI. Two have been promoted and tenured three times. Two counselor educators were currently full professors, and one was to apply for full professor in the fall. Two of the participants had 20 years or more experience in higher education, two had nine or fewer years, and two had 18 years of service as a professor. They had over 150 publications and over five million dollars in grant awards. Table 1 displays pertinent participant information.

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant Name	Years in Higher Education	Number of Publications	Presentations/ Workshops/ Talks	Grants & Awards Received	Times Tenured	Full Prof
Dr. SuperWoman	21	29	42	> $4 million	3	☐
Dr. Kate	21	18	32	> $3.5 million	2	☐
Dr. Isa	18	50	48/24	> $22,000	3	This fall
Dr. Kay	18				2	
Dr. Blue	9	16	26/34	> $1 million	1	
Dr. Larissa	7	12	55/10	> $100, 000	1	

Presentation of Findings

The core components of BFT (Collins, 2009), interpretive framework, epistemological approaches, and its significance for empowerment served as the theoretical framework of data analysis in the current study in an effort to disrupt oppression. The utilization of BFT allowed the exploration of the words and ideas of participants that supported a space for safe and brave dialogue and encouraged participants to take personal accountability while sharing their lived

experiences by way of the 10 semi-structured questions used in the interview. Seven questions focused on the positive experiences that allowed the participants to feel they belonged in a community that accepted and nurtured them and their contributions to higher education in historically White spaces and places. The semi-structured questions positioned the Black women counselor educator (BWCE) to explore their lived experiences and further understand their self-definition and self-evaluations that promote thriving. The open interview questions allowed for the four dimensions of BFT epistemology (Collins, 2009): lived experiences as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue to assess knowledge claims, the ethic of personal accountability, and the ethic of caring to bridge the disconnect between personal and professional lives. By extension, the themes derived from the transcription of the participants reflected as such based on the following research question that guided the research study:

- What are the lived experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators in CACREP-accredited counseling programs at historically White institutions (HWIs)?

Maintaining the standpoint of the BFT framework, the participants in this study created dialogues surrounding their process of achieving tenure and thriving at an HWI as a Black woman. The researcher identified three themes and nine subthemes (see Table 2) revealed through statements from the tenured Black women counselor educators about their lived experiences at CACREP-accredited HWIs. The three central themes and six sub-themes developed from data analysis through coding, analysis, and discussion of the data. The first two themes speak to support but from different types. One is internal (colleagues, intra-department, etc. and the other is external (leadership and the ways they can help.

Table 2

Themes

Theme	Subtheme
Support From Colleagues	It Takes a Village
	Just Me & My Colleagues
	Space
Leadership Support	Mentorship
	Sponsorship Allyship
Perseverance	And Still, I Rise
	Faith Over Fear
	Be You, Everyone Else Is Taken

Theme 1: Support from My Colleagues

Throughout these subthemes, the six participants discussed the experiences that conveyed the importance of sustenance to their affirmation of tenure through various means and spaces that decreased the mindset of striving and increased their ability to thrive. They discussed the support they established once they accepted the position at the HWI and, in one case, built on one they already had in place. The most common idea explored was institutional support. The participants needed the institutions that marketed them but did not invest in them or their work. They stated that for them to thrive in White spaces and through the White gazes, they needed the institution to *Stand by* them when the time comes—followed by the reimagination of their political empowerment of entering places that denied access to their mothers, which provided new opportunities for fostering social justice. Depending on the setting, using the insights gained via *outsider-within status* stimulated creativity that helped the participant and their institution (Collins, 2000). These imaginations led to their perseverance to become and sustain them as tenured Black Women Counselor educators. Institutional support systems reported being with the

core team of colleagues, leadership, the community across the campus, allies, sponsors, and students.

Subtheme 1: Just Me and My Colleagues

The subtheme of "just me and my colleagues" arose within the statements of each participant. Each one had a story to share that enforced a connection to collaborate with a colleague, leading them to be seen, validated, and understood. Participants were also asked to discuss their positive classroom experiences at the university. Almost all participants cited their favorable experiences with Black and other faculty of color. This was an interesting fact for the study, considering most of them were the only Black women upon their arrival at the HWI. However, they often embedded the language of belonging, mattering, and establishing a community for themselves, their students, and others. Collaborations were characterized by support as the participants labored on the idea and the practicality of collaborating with others in their department and across the campuses. One participant discussed how that was not something they readily did with colleagues but often with students.

Dr. Isa noted how much she appreciated that her Black female supervisor was someone she could relate to and how her interaction with other Black female colleagues nurtured her: And just, completely Black girl magic, right, like experiences, you know, and just being able to say, "Oh, my gosh! Did you see that?" We don't talk every day. But we meet once a week, and we will sometimes go back and forth via text for different things, but I just have someone I feel like I can trust. And I feel like we get together, and it has been wonderful. It's like sister friends.

Dr. Superwoman indicated she felt respected and protected when this happened:

And I even had one of those students go to the chair of our department instead of coming to talk to me first. The chair of the department sent them back to me and said, this is

where you start. And when we scheduled to meet, I had another faculty member at the meeting with me because I didn't trust what was going to happen there. But having that support from them was important.

Dr. Kay noted how much she felt seen, heard, and understood through this experience:

When my husband died, people covered my classes for weeks. And I remember talking to our chair and saying, "I do not know how to do this. We teach in the evenings. I no longer have another person to watch this pre-kindergartener I live with, and I cannot teach in the evening. And I teach graduate students." They said, "We will figure it out. What do you need? We will do what you need us to do." Those people were 100% there for me.

Dr. Blue excitedly stated, "We were able to collaborate on different things. She helped me get some internal grants, and we were able to facilitate mental health and wellbeing workshops, even though that wasn't her area."

Two other participants did not discuss collaboration directly as a strength or a weakness in their journey to being tenured. One participant noted how much it enhanced their tenure package and strengthened them as a BWCE. Black women academics who choose to believe other Black women can become suspect (Collins, 2000). It was this fact that led me to my dissertation topic—dealing with Black women as intellectuals and how that ability shows up in spaces or is encapsulated in concepts such as sisterhood, mentorship, and the idea of the village.

Subtheme 2: It Takes a Village

During the interviews, some participants discussed the positive experiences and emotions associated with being a BWCE at an HWI. These experiences came through kind words and deeds from students who affirmed their works and actions through letters, emails, and face-to-

face interactions. The students who validated them in this space were Black, White, and multiracial. They came from others across the campus who could guide processes and spaces for them. The participants spoke patiently about the relationships that supported them in their tenure process, specifically, the allyship in spaces where they served as witnesses to their personhood and voice and they could validate their actions with others. Participants also used networks to set and accomplish their professional goals by forming and maintaining groups of Black women peers who held them responsible for achieving their research, teaching, and service objectives (Gray-Nicolas & Nash, 2021).

Dr. Kay believed that connecting with other people, especially outside of your department, would provide support in invaluable ways.

I think those connections are helpful, not just for the promotion process but also for work, happiness, and peace. Knowing people at your university and being a part of a community have their valuables. You can hear from other people? You may learn before it is too late that there are parts of the packet that you could omit if it feels like it will be harmful. I mean, all those things matter.

Dr Larissa appeared overwhelmed with strong positive emotions as she recounted how her students shared their appreciation for her support of them on various accounts. She seemed incredibly joyous because they were students she thought did not care for what she was doing as a small token of motivation for them:

Former students have shared with me since their first semester in the program that they gained invaluable experiences in education, and the curriculum allowed them to apply for work opportunities. They said, "Looking back at the experiences I had in your classes allowed me to obtain an income opportunity with a reputable organization, the weekly

emails allowed me to become aware of mental health conferences and networking events in the area, and the educational lessons prepared me to work with a wide variety of clients."

Dr. Superwoman was greeted with this sentiment, "If you want to work with a medical school, if you want to work with the school of pharmacy, we can support you in that. And so, I'm doing a couple of research projects now with the School of Pharmacy."

Subtheme 3: Space

Through a Black geographic lens, scholars uncover how the social identity of one's body can operate as a spatial indicator. Race, class, gender, and sexuality determine patterns of habitation wherein Black people must negotiate places and spaces of denial and resistance. Mia Birdsong (2020) wrote, "People do not survive racism, xenophobia, gender discrimination, and poverty without developing extraordinary skills, systems, and practices of support" (p. 29). In doing so, they carve a path for everyone else as indicated by Dr. Isa, who patiently expressed that her purpose was to support Black women through spaces and places:

The educator that I am, I was able to create spaces. I started doing Affinity group work. I had this years-long Affinity group that I ran with women who were in the master's program and the Doc program. We could come together, be and be embraced and cared for, and create those spaces. It was so meaningful for me to be able to see the impact in real-time. Moreover, it impacted me, too; I needed those support spaces just as much as they did.

Dr. Superwoman continued the thought by extending the spaces outside of work even to play:

We may need to process what happened with the student during that day or just get together because we genuinely like each other. That was my experience at AS, and it was my experience here in M. Moreover, I think having those types of relationships makes going to work a lot easier. It makes dealing with student stress and deadlines much easier because we know we will all come together.

Further, Dr. Blue remarked,

During COVID-19, we developed an affinity group for Black faculty and staff because of, you know, everything that happened with George Floyd and Amad Arbury and Brianna Taylor. We decided to have an affinity group, just as a safe space for Black people, because we were all talking about these things in silos, but nobody was really talking to each other.

Collins (1986) emphasized Black women's social location within White spaces as an outsider-within status. For example, Black women domestic workers were *outside* due to their identities as Black women but *within* White households as caretakers. Outsider-within status articulates how Black women experience exploitation due to their socio-historical positioning. In *We Want to Do More Than Survive*, Love (2019) explained how Black (dark) people navigate educational systems and institutions that often dispose of and erase their experiences. Because institutions have failed to act or respond with and on behalf of Black women, Black women have created space for themselves, written themselves into existence, and disrupted systems and people who silenced them (Collins, 1986; Commodore et al., 2018).

Theme 2: Leadership Support

Leadership is a matter of the heart, which is what participants conveyed throughout the dialogues as a necessary and, at times, tangible result of caring about those you serve, not those

who serve you. The participants, through storytelling, created visual imagery of their experiences of how distinct levels of leadership can and did positively change the trajectory of their journey in the academy. They offered many practices for leadership, such as mentorship, sponsorship, and allyship. All participants suggested that leadership be mindful and intentional when recruiting, retaining, and promoting BWCE. It is important to understand how their advocacy works to address the challenges and issues faced uniquely by women of color in the academy.

Dr. Kay offered this advice to leaders:

One is to be clear about the expectations. Be familiar with the bias in the evaluation process and the bias in the promotion and your process. It is not enough just to hire somebody as a counselor educator. You would like them to develop their research agenda and for their career to unfold at your university, right?

Dr. Isa valued leaders who displayed the following:

Check in often. Meet with us often. Do not sit and wait. When I was at an unnamed institution, I ran into the Dean, and I said, "Hello, Dean," and he kind of stopped, and he was like, "Are you? Are you one of the faculty?" And I just knew at that point that he didn't even know me. The fact that what he said was just clear. He did not care enough to try to figure out who all his faculty were. He should have been saying, "Oh, it is so good to see you have not got a chance to chat. Come by my office, you know. I would love to see what you have going on right now."

Dr. Larissa valued leaders who asked questions, followed up, and were knowledgeable about what was going on campus and in the world:

Make sure that they are not just marketing to us in their campaigns during, for example, Black History Month or just putting us on the website, but instead that they are

connecting with the Black Faculty 365. So, there are current programs in place that they have outside consultants that they are bringing in, like from firms that are by us for us. Dr. Kate discussed in detail the importance of a mindful leader:

I would say support is especially important. And in various forms. So even every couple of months. "How are you doing? "How's everything going?" "Is everyone treating you okay?" That's something. He would say things like. "So, how did things go with the transition? How do things go with him? Is she okay?" So, I remember thinking, at least, that's helpful.

Dr. Superwoman found this act from leadership prudent in the success of BWCE. I told them I would not come without tenure when negotiating to come here. And as I was negotiating with the department chair, he said, "We can bring you in at full, and then we can do the promotion process. But I would caution you to wait because there's a bigger salary if you do both simultaneously." So, having that information and having him share it is a value-added to his leadership.

Dr. Blue exclaimed,

And so, me and two colleagues. We sat down. We wrote a proposal. We did a rubric we did. We wrote a whole program for a writing retreat, and we submitted it to the Deans and the Provost, and they all were like, "I'm going to fund it for as long as I can fund it." We call him our guy because, you know, favor and being blessed to have people who wanted, who could invest in us.

Two participants stated they were unaware of the criteria or a rubric to guide them into and through the tenure process. Their relationships with professional mentors and participation in professional organizations and networks also provided support systems for Black women and

other persons of color who exist in counterparties where Black women can be accepted and embraced. Overall, the support of leadership goes a long way for BWCE, who show up alone, without a complete understanding of the culture within and outside of their departments, allowing for a myriad of positive experiences to be lived. The presence and genuine concern from leadership allow for stability and feelings of mattering, which is different from belonging. More importantly, it says that not only do I understand your experience, but I will act with empathy on your behalf. I will see you!

Subtheme 1: Mentorship

The study found that BWCE thrive when they receive mentoring. Their comments gave insight into how it aligns them and prevents career pitfalls. It also decreases the time and reduces some of the worry and fear associated with the process they must undertake to become tenured. It is important to note that Larissa did not receive mentorship on her campus. While it was a priority when interviewing, it was a red flag at this institution, and she had to seek it outside her campus. Dr. Kate and Dr. Kay spoke of their friendships from their previous institutions, which were historically Black institutions (HBCUs), to support their mentorship.

> Dr. Larissa expressed how many different spaces she was able to acquire mentorship: I'm going to say that one of my sources of support has been a mentor network. Oh, goodness. It has even been some of my like with the professional organizations and even with some of the peers I've formed within some of the interest networks.

> Dr. Isa insisted, "Provide mentorship opportunities and not just the basic level of mentorship. You know, they have national mentorship programs that cost money now. But those are the types of programs that are also highly beneficial."

> Dr. Blue added,

I think it's great to get in with good mentorship. People who will be honest with you. To reimagine your work. Don't go it alone. Find the people you can trust, and sometimes it means not being in your department because all of my real homies, like the people I'm down with at my institution, are in Theater and Criminal Justice. Like they are not counselors. And that is helpful because they have different experiences that I have not had or was not looking at. And they were my mentors, too. So that was helpful to me is to have people who, have you mind your tribe, yeah, finding a tribe?

Dr. Superwoman was intentional with the following words: "Like I said, even after 21 years of teaching, I still need a mentor. I need somebody to tell me, 'This is what you ask for when negotiating for this new position.'"

Dr. Kay simply stated, "If you have a mentor on the faculty, somebody to say, 'Look, this is a thing that happened. I want to understand how I protect myself from that.' Then you have opportunities."

Black women's individual and collective resiliencies are heralded as the contributory factors that undergird their success. Despite the historicity of racism and sexism prevalent in higher education, Black women have deconstructed the opposing factors influencing their existence as faculty, including lack and differentiation of socialization (Davis et al., 2011) and inequitable access to mentoring (Tillman, 2001). In turn, they have inventively repurposed these forces as motivation to thrive in institutions. The participants verified its importance whether they have 0-21 years of experience. There is always a need to have someone who has been where you are going, who has position, title, and privilege along with sincere care for you and your career.

Subtheme 2: Sponsorship

The subtheme of "sponsorship" came with much passion as the participants considered how leadership could promote BWCEs when they are not in the room. Rosalind Chow (2021) of the Harvard Business Review stated,

> Sponsors act as brand managers and publicists for their protégés. This work involves the management of *others'* views of the sponsored employee. Thus, the relationship at the heart of sponsorship is not between protégés and sponsors, as is often thought, but between sponsors and an audience — the people they mean to sway to the side of their protégés. (para. 5)

In the article *Getting Black Women to the C-Suite: Sponsorship Can Make a Difference*, Dr Stephanie Smith discussed the positives of such an action for the institution and the transformative impact of driving diversity and belonging.

Dr. Isa supported the positive impact of having sponsors with this statement,

I've had a couple of sponsors throughout. My dean at my previous institution was a White man, and he positioned me in many rooms. But there were certain occasions when his words, position, and power were right. They allowed me to have specific opportunities. And so, I would say, use their positions of power to afford Black women opportunities that they may not always have gotten.

Dr. Blue encouraged those with power and privilege to be coconspirators in their tenure process:

> Putting your career on the line for the sake of mine, and I don't know that everybody is willing to do that, like being able to weaponize your title to save and protect my own. So, because you are the Dean, you will do this because you're the chair. You're going to help

me. You are invested in my success because you have already walked it. And if you

knew that it was hard. If you recognize the hoops, then create opportunities for me to be

able to walk. I don't have to jump them.

When you think about sponsorship, it is often a barrier-breaker that fosters representation. In a word, it is a game-changer, as these narrations have exemplified by the participants. They stated that it offers them crucial support and advocacy, one of the five tenets of being a counselor educator.

The participants chronicled a call to action for leaders to know, get to know them, check in with them, and understand what they are doing and what makes it essential. They want leaders to understand that it goes beyond recruiting a diversity hire. They need them to sponsor them in every space and every place they go. Use themselves as a tool to advance them and create collaborations for them. Finding the funding to support their research is a small part of being a leader who provides for their faculty. It is different from mentorship in that you are more than fielding questions and providing support when things get hard or provide clarity. Being a sponsor is about ensuring the narratives of Black women keep the Black woman as the center of the story because her works and her presence matter. It is about challenging the status quo when necessary and using your voice to leverage her in spaces. In a word, it is a co-conspiratorship that leads to and promotes a Black woman in spaces and places she has no access to unless through you. Because of that, you will create a pathway for her to continue.

Subtheme 3: Allies

The subtheme "allies" was born out of how BWCE thought people showed up for them in a way that says, "I've seen what has happened, I've listened to the narratives, and I understand." Those people who choose to stand up and contribute to their success are valued and

considered someone who creates ways to protect them, support them, and create provisions for them to be sustained in higher education and a historically White institution.

Dr. Superwoman was intentional with the following words, "I say find an ally, somebody on campus you know who can support you and who can serve as a mentor. Someone to tell and ask things such as, "'I don't know what to do with this.'"

Dr. Isa reported,

I need the White people who are in positions of power often to vote for me. To champion my work. I have found it to be the most beneficial when I connect with White deans, White male deans, or White male department chairs. And meet once a month, or can we meet weekly, depending on the situation, and just be in contact about things and for them to know you? And to have some connection for them to see you like, you must get beyond the stereotypes they often have about us.

Dr. Blue remarked,

I was like, "I know you're looking for an instructor to teach diversity, and it's a class I don't mind covering. But I want you to know that these are the kinds of evaluations I get. I think they're unfair and unfounded." And she was like, "I agree." And so, the program coordinator, a White woman, and I and the chair., we all sat together and were like, "How do we protect you from these bad evaluations?" So, the program coordinator was like, "What if we co-teach it so that there are two people in space? So, if I'm getting good evaluations and you're getting poor ones, we're doing the same 3 hours. Then we know that something racist is happening in the space." So, we've been co-teaching that class together since 2018.

Allies can play a vital role in changing the climate in academic institutions. Although most scholars agree that allies are integral to reducing oppression, there is wide variation in ideas of who allies are and what their behaviors constitute. To address inclusivity more effectively in higher education, all members must engage in this work (LeMaire et al., 2020). The participants shared a variety of examples of how the allied behaviors benefited them in their spaces and personhood while highlighting challenges to them and their tenure as BWCE.

Theme 3: Perseverance

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's recollection of an anonymous Black woman who calmed her feelings of self-doubt by telling her to persevere as she walked through the unfamiliar halls of Harvard University carry the enormous pressures of being a minority within a minority; she was moved to do just that. That is how the participants appeared to feel as they described the obstacles and their impacts and how they used external support systems like religion, spirituality, and the importance of authenticity. It is important to note that the participants reported receiving sustenance in many ways and means. However, it did not come without a cost to them. This, too, was an alarming theme that rose out of the myriad of positives conveyed. They shared stories of how their explanations for them to be where they are in their career were all God. It was faith over fear, and that supported them in knowing they could do hard things, to know that they were their best thing just as they were.

 Subtheme 1: And Still, I Rise

The subtheme "and still I rise" is theme focused on the cost of being a Black woman in the academy and the loss endured to become tenured. Because of this, Black women in academia are tired and becoming unwell. Over the past year, a number of Black women in the academy continued to push through until they could no longer rise. For example, two Black women

college presidents died while on the job last fall. Texas A&M discriminated against Dr. Kathleen McElroy so egregiously that they had to pay her $1 million, and the president lost her job. Dr. Claudine Gay was hounded out of her presidency unjustly. Most recently, Dr. Antoinette Bonnie Candia-Bailey died by suicide, citing repeated harassment at work. While these are not counselor educators, it does support the participants' emotionally weighted narratives of their lived experiences as Black women in the academy. They readily admitted that they had some good days, but there were some days that they had to overcome. bell hooks (2015) stated, "To end racism, White folks who have accepted unearned White privilege must be willing to forego those rewards and stand down, expressing their solidarity with those who are the most immediate victims of racist assault and domination" (p. 114).

Dr. Isa, a twice-tenured counselor educator whose training, education, work, and experience have been in historically White spaces, shared these compelling words: We lost something. There is a loss. As I talked about experiencing infertility and the stress of that and how I felt like I gave up a part of my. . . . While I do have a lot that others might not have, there is a sacrifice, and some of it is physical; like I said, I had a

> lot of illness. I have had many surgeries/procedures in the last 14 years, dealing with different chronic health things. It is exacerbated by the stress of the academy and being at a historically White university trying to get tenure. The actual physical impact, other than not getting tenure, is what we need to talk about that impact.

Dr. Blue expressed her concern as follows:

> So, it's just pay Black women. If you're going to ask me to do something. Give me a course release. There must be compensation for its impact on me. You want my body, my

labor, my education, my expertise, but you want it for free. And that's not how this

works. You must pay too. So, pay us and protect us.

Dr. Kate related,

There's a lot of drama, but it takes this toll. So, this sabbatical is very much needed

because I feel like I need this time just to recuperate emotionally. Just from the career

path, stuff that you deal with, and things like that. So, it's been a welcome break from not

having to deal with people for a while in the workplace. And I remember thinking that

universities need to take this stuff seriously because people can commit suicide or things

like that.

The systemic issues within academia that have negatively impacted all those women were

not new. They are not accidental. They also are not confined to Black women at the very top.

The BWCEs in this study announced how the emotional labor of being in these spaces had

reduced their physical, mental, and emotional continuums of wellness at times. Some of them left

as acts of self-care, self-empowerment, and resistance to oppression and harm.

Subtheme 2: We Believe

The Ohio Players, a Rhythm and Blues (R&B) band, released a song titled *Pain* in 1972.

This song describes the physical and emotional pain being experienced, and the person is asking

for help to deal with it. They are consoled and hold on to life. In 1994, The Sounds of Blackness,

a gospel choir, released a song titled *I Believe* where they exalted their understanding of the

power of God and their faith every minute and every hour. Several participants said that for their

faith, their knowing, and God's grace, they made it as far as they had come. They commented

with grace about their accomplishments, but they believed it was the joy that came in the

morning, after sometimes weeping and wailing at night.

Dr. Isa discussed the power of her faith to guide her through the processes of being a Black woman counselor educator at an HWI.:

It must be ordained that I be in this place because I never had anyone to show me the way. I've always had to figure it out. And so, I'm grateful that I'm here, and doors opened, and I did the best I could, and it ended up being enough in certain places, I showed up, and I did the best that I could do. And some people often are like, how did you get here? How did you do it? And I'm like, it really is a God thing for me, like I don't know.

Dr. Superwoman shared how things were divinely placed and orchestrated for her, which led her to trust the movements around her:

I've always felt, and my spirit somehow, some way, that change, or shift was coming. I feel that I have been divinely led and placed into where I'm supposed to be because each time, there's been something that, again, something that's made me a better researcher, a better teacher, and a better grant writer. So, with each move, I've become a better professor. I've become, you know, much more self-aware of who I am and what I have to offer. So, there's been a lot of moves, a lot of challenges, but they've all been good. And I think that's all a part of this divine placement. Things are just how they need to be so that I can succeed.

Dr. Kay said, "I've been truly fortunate in my time here on Earth. Right. That life very often gave me what I needed."

Dr. Larissa appeared emphatic about where her help and strength first comes she stated, "I'm going to say that my sources of support have been external . . . it has been my spiritual and religious network."

As a self-proclaimed woman of faith, Dr. Blue commented said, "I didn't know that it wasn't until I had a moment of faith. I was praying, and I was just like, you know, Lord, please vindicate me. I would be a real like psalms like vindicate me".

According to a study conducted by the Kaiser Foundation and the Washington Post, African American women are among the most religious groups of people in the nation. In fact, 74 percent of African American women polled for the survey said living a religious life is particularly important, compared to just 57 percent of White women. The study also shined a spotlight on the deep religious influence spirituality has in Black lives. In fact, in times of turmoil, the numbers jump: About 87% of Black women say they rely on their faith to help them tread troubled waters. Scholars of religion argue that during tumultuous times, Black folks lean on their faith for spiritual support. With the triple jeopardy these BWCEs possess, it was understandable to see this as a theme to their struggle and perseverance to become tenured and sustaining their life and the experiences of a Black woman in a historically White institution. BWCEs possess this kind of knowing, this belief that did not fail them, that did not abandon them, even in moments of disassociation, to survive until they were thriving could only be explained by Dr. Isa as "a God thing" or moment. For them, there was none greater than God, and they did not know where they would be without His love.

Subtheme 3: Be You, Everyone Else is Taken

The subtheme "be you, everyone else is taken" was resounding when participants were asked what they would offer to Black Women on the tenure track or recently tenured. The participants shared hopes and dreams for those to come or start out in space. They wanted them to be themselves authentic and know they are enough to build self-efficacy by prioritizing

selfcare in all its many facets, as expressed in their brief narratives based on their lived

experiences.

Dr. Blue encouraged BWCEs to do the following:

I think for women who are already tenured: "You can breathe now and have peace. You

are always enough, even though those spaces will make you feel like you weren't; you

are all you need. You were always that girl, right."

Dr. Larissa voiced,

I recommend that you have your support networks and engaging in wellness activities,

including professional wellness activities. Along with all the different forms of wellness,

So, when I think about financial wellness, emotional wellness, social wellness, and

spiritual wellness. Making sure you are being authentically you.

Dr. Kay shared this thought:

A lesson that I learned: if nobody knows who you are, then nobody knows who you are.

If you want to be able to state it, you want to be able to get to your approach. You need to

make sure people know you. It would be best to ensure people see that you're working.

Dr. Kate advised,
If it's someone new, have them ask for support funds for research. I would also say,

"Check to make sure that you're the person who feels supported, and when you are

qualified to take the Sabbatical, go ahead and take it to get the emotional break for a

while because sometimes you just need to distance yourself from the job."

Finally, Dr. Superwoman encouraged,

I think it's important that I show up here. I know students need to see me, not just Black

students. But White students need to see me as well, working my butt off to do what I

need to do to become a full professor.

Some of the participants shared as a suggestion, and some indeed shared the sentiment of bell hooks (2015):

> When you wake up and find yourself living someplace where there is nobody you love
> and trust, no community, it is time to leave town—to pack up and go (you can even go
> tonight). And where you need to go is any place where there are arms that can hold you,
> that will not let you go.

The participants shared that it is important for you to know that knowing when to quit is linked to knowing one's value. That you have skills, talents, and yourself, and you will be okay.

Chapter Summary

This chapter showed the findings of the interviews with the participants, giving insight into the lived experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at HWIs. The audacity exemplified throughout speaks to one crucial issue facing Black women intellectuals is what constitutes adequate justification that a given knowledge claim, such as a fact or theory, is valid (Collins, 2000). The following three central themes, and nine sub themes were developed from data analysis through coding, analysis, and discussion of the data:

Support/Sustenance~ Support from Leadership (Allies, Sponsorship, Mentorship), Support from others (space colleagues, students), My Emotional Labor Ain't Free. / And Still I Rise, (We Believe), Be You, Everyone Else is Taken. Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4, along with implications for further research and policy and procedures for counselor educators, deans, departments, and institutions who recruit, retain, and promote Black women.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND STUDY SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and discuss the study's results as they relate to the lived experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at historically White institutions with CACREP accreditation. This chapter discusses the study's findings, limitations, suggestions for policy change, and recommendations for further research and practice.

Overview of the Study

This study addressed the lack of tenured Black women counselor educators at historically White institutions. The perspective driving this study is that institutional support for Black women seeking tenure or being able to acquire a tenure track position at HWIs could have implications for addressing the tenured Black woman achievement gap. It should be noted that this perspective is not calling out institutions or leadership for lack of services and resources for Black women but calls for the mindful and intentional acts of services and provision of resources for Black women, specifically in this research, counselor educators.

Perhaps it is because tenured Black women are disproportionately represented in higher education that some may assume that programming, academic support, and intervention for this group are not needed. That assumption, however, needs to be revised. Although Black women have gradually increased their participation, matriculation, retention, and completion rates in higher education, their struggles and successes are still apparent and distinct (West & Porter, 2023).

In order to understand the successes and experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at HWIs, Black feminist thought framework was employed to assist in answering the

research question: What are the experiences of tenured Black women Counselor Educators in CACREP-accredited counseling programs at historically White institutions (HWIs)?

Because qualitative research is grounded in people's lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), this design was best suited for the study, and to answer the questions, phenomenology was employed as the methodology. Phenomenology was the appropriate choice for this study because it describes the meaning of the lived experiences of several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon. A phenomenological approach was best suited for this study for three reasons. First, this study did not attempt to examine a person or unit; instead, it sought to understand the lived experiences of tenured Black women counselor educators at historically White institutions. By studying several individuals, it is possible to include multidimensional identities in the analysis. Second, a phenomenology study would help an outsider better understand what it is like for Black women to succeed in spaces that are not designed to facilitate her success. Thirdly, there is a precedent of prior research using phenomenology to address and explain Black experiences on White campuses (see Davis et al., 2004; Harper, 2009; Patton Davis, 2006; Stewart, 2002).

I collected data from six self-identified tenured Black women counselor educators. I recruited the participants in two phases. The first phase was a pre-selection, and the second phase was a final selection. I based the initial selection upon three criteria: (a) they must self-identify as Black, (b) they must self-identify as female, (c) they teach at an HWI institution, and (d) they must possess tenure. For the recruitment strategy, the following networks were solicited: social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) and email list serves such as Counselor Education and Supervision Network (CESNET), ACA (American Counseling Association), ACES (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision), SACES (Southern Association

for Counselor Education and Supervision) and AMCD (Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development). Additionally, flyers were shared with colleagues and peers for dissemination to particular groups and forums (i.e., Facebook groups *Women of Color in Counselor Education*, *Black Women in Higher Ed*). It targeted areas where Black women counselor educators are highly populated and often congregate for information, support, and training. Using these multiple sampling approaches, a diverse group of tenured Black women counselor educators was recruited for the sample.

Each participant was interviewed in virtual Zoom sessions once for an average of 1.5 hours. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and provided to participants for interrater reliability. Then, they were analyzed, and excerpts from the transcriptions were highlighted and coded.

Discussion of Research Findings

Discussion of Theme 1: Stand by Me/Support From

The most prevailing theme in this study was support. Some comprised diverse faculty colleagues external to Black and women networks; others comprised Affinity Groups designed by Black women faculty for Black Faculty, Black students, and Black women faculty. Support networks served varied purposes for the participants. Some leveraged their support networks' expertise for faculty socialization to help understand informal and formal promotion and tenure expectations and navigate the associated processes, and so much more if they had a community of people who would stand by them.

Those communities need to look both like them and be diverse to foster belonging and mattering for BWCE to be fluid in themselves and the spaces they garner. Institutions are to build bridges and forge relationships that are consistent and continuously build on unity and

connectivity from one department to another. This type of culture will permeate and disband silos and disruptive mindsets that do not benefit each person, student, or institution. The participants expressed that those moments of care experienced in their village sustained them. It was in those spaces that they were safe, connected, and validated. The community where the village ensured everyone could win by being preventive and interventive.

All of the participants valued the spaces they carved out for themselves, even the participants who had to go outside of their colleges and local space to find a place where they mattered. The affinity groups offered similar benefits, but they connected Black women due to their alienating experiences with racism, sexism, and other barriers within HWIs (Kelly& Winkle-Wagner, 2017; Patton & McClure, 2009; Porter & Dean, 2015). The Black Joy of being with other Black people and Black Women intentionally was the conversation that grounded many of them. To have a space where they could rejuvenate, be themselves, and be reminded, like Sethe in Beloved, that they are their own best thing.

Discussion of Theme 2: Leadership Support

All participants narrated systems of support that helped them navigate their lived experiences in HWI spaces and places. These support systems were crucial to their survival as Black women in the academy, specifically in counselor education. Others used their positionality to sponsor and create opportunities for advancement in collaborative spaces, including funding. The participants discussed the necessity of offering, providing, creating, and demonstrating support to them in a myriad of ways that would allow them to be successful. They understood how the collegiality and leadership of and from others established platforms and pathways towards their ability to not only become tenured but also to be better clinicians, instructors, grant writers, mentors, supervisors

These support networks were a part of the mentorships, sponsorships, and allyships modeled by leaders and extended by others across content and context. Leadership is defined and demonstrated in the culture and climate of the institutional spaces—not just the department but inclusive of the college and the university. One participant suggested that an intense review of the mission and vision statements be used to do more than create a strategic plan that generally does not meet the needs of faculty and staff. Leaders are to ensure alignment with values and decrease the cognitive dissonance that often takes place in historically White spaces regarding Blacks and specifically Black women.

Discussion of Theme 3: Perseverance

As is highlighted in a study of 220 U.S. Black college women ages 18-48, even though being seen as strong Black women came with its benefits—such as being thought of as resilient, hardworking, independent, and nurturing—it also came at a price to their mental and physical health (Jones et al., 2021). Aya (2024) reported, "These kinds of experiences can take a toll on women's bodies and can result in poor maternal health, cancer, shorter life expectancy, and other symptoms that impair their ability to be well" (para. 12).

About 87 percent of Black women say they rely on their faith to help them tread troubled waters (Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation, 2011). Scholars such as Stacey FloydThomas, associate professor of ethics and society at Vanderbilt University Divinity School of Religion, argued that during tumultuous times, Black folks lean on their faith for spiritual support (Washington Post, 2024). Dr. Floyd Thomas added, "Black women have been the most mistreated and scandalized in U.S. society and culture as they wrestle both individually and collectively with the triple jeopardy of racism, sexism, and classism." Researcher Dr. Sherry

Watt (2003) taught us that Black women use "spiritual understanding to cope, resist, and develop identity" (p. 29). Black women also use their spirituality as a psychological resistance strategy to deflect negative societal messages. In regards to "the enduring role religion has played in the lives of African-American women" (para. 3), Cole (2012) quoted assistant professor Stacey Floyd-Thomas's explanation: "It is no wonder that Black women would seek out their faith to find relief, reprieve, resolution, and redemption" (para 3).

Challenges

Due to a lack of participants, this research study's recruitment spanned over four months. Various methods were used to acquire a sample size but were still met with small numbers. The Delimitation section in Chapter 1 expressed some of the reasons for this. What was discovered, however, was that there is a small number of tenured Black women counselor educators at HWIs or who may have been tenured there and left afterward. Because of the small number of participants, five out of six were from southern HWIs, and one was from a northern HWI. While there were some overlapping experiences, the perspectives were different. It was suggested that geography played a role and subsequently allowed for bias to intertwine during some of the conversations, making it challenging to get to some positives in the experiences at HWIs.

Recommendations of Participants

During this study, each participant shared their thoughts on what leadership could do to recruit, retain, and promote BWCE, and they offered the same to future BWCE or those on the tenure track. These recommendations were a part of the semi-structured questions used during the interview.

Recommendations for Future Leadership~ Deans, Department Chairs

Culture and climate are important indicators of what is happening in and on higher educational campuses. However, the question is whether they are reviewed with the intention to establish and strengthen practices that promote the well-being and the academic status of Black women. Okolo (2024) affirmed, "This includes intentionally examining patterns in retention and tenure and implementing solutions to equity" (para. 10).

The participants described several ways to reflect their nationality, creating solutions for them in their tenure and promotion process as indications of being seen and heard by their leaders, such as mentorship. Their advice for leadership was to assign competent and collegial people from the campus and pay for competent and reputable mentor programs for BWCEs. They also recommended showing support of individuals and their work through sponsorship by using their professional capital to position your BWCEs for collaborative opportunities and research funding.

Moreover, leaders need to understand the BWCEs' plight in these White spaces. They need leaders to listen and lead with empathy, recognize barriers, and change policies and practices that further marginalize Black women. It is necessary for those in leadership roles to advocate for equity and just ways for BWCEs to walk through the same doors as others, not because of tokenism but because they deserve and require the same treatment as others—no more hoop-jumping. Leaders who make it a priority to check in with BWCEs by providing an established system where new BWCEs are visited and followed up on during their stay with the university will increase and create a positive retention and promotion process of BWCEs. Leaders should lead with intentionality for the humaneness of the Black woman.

Recommendations for Future Counselor Educators

The participants wanted future and beginning BWCEs to know that there are three areas to decrease being visible but invisible and reduce the impact of marginalization. They are personal, social, and individual. The first thing they suggested was that the future and beginning BWCEs can breathe now. You are here, and you deserve to be here. Self-care is how you overcome the barriers that are in some of these spaces. Engage in prioritizing multiple areas of wellness to maintain your emotional and physical strength. This includes a therapist to help you process those feelings and thoughts that will come. This is how you control your narrative against being an "angry Black woman." This is part of the work for you. Know that you have done the work for this academic space, and continue to do the work by building your craft and polishing skills.

Second, find your community and build your support system from various campus communities both on and off campus. It is important to be seen. Do not isolate yourself. There is joy in the community, so apply for service on campuses and collaborate with others, especially those outside of your spaces. This will strengthen and direct your voice when you ask for what you want and need to be your best self. You will never know if you do not ask. If you are met with more "Nos" than "Yeses," then let it go. Do not set yourself on fire to keep others warm. Staying for the children will only harm you more. They will know through your instructional practices and how you show up for them. Do not be afraid to leave.

Third, do not let the negative narratives surrounding being a black woman in the academy and at an HWI create automatic trauma responses. It was noted by Dr. Blue,

> The narratives have set us up to go in thinking we cannot, or it is gonna be hard, and it is, gonna be hard. However, it will not be the demise of who you are, and I know loss is

inevitable in some of these spaces. But it does not have to be. If we can get the right

information out there.

Believing in yourself and your capabilities is the first step to being well. Your self-worth is

directly connected to your self-esteem, and it needs to be nourished by those who love and

support you. The community you build will tell you to breathe, they will guide you, and trust will

be a natural component in those spaces. As Dr. Larissa stated, "Not all skin folk are kin folk,"

but do not block your blessings either. Write your narrative and not expect the ones previously

live before you but learn from them for yourself.

Implications for Practicing Counselors

Three of the participants directly spoke about their personal counselors and how they

needed and used them to maintain and sustain themselves in the historically White spaces. They

shared how their mind and emotions needed safe spaces to be brave and vulnerable in a way that

allows a release of the weights and burdens imposed upon their mind and body because "many

Black women rely on their strength and resilience to deal with the multitudinous forms of

discrimination they can experience on a daily basis" (para. 8). They have often escaped into the

strong Black woman (SBW), a social- and self-schema. The SBW schema is an archetype of

Black womanhood traditionally characterized by three features: emotional restraint,

independence, and caretaking (often at the expense of oneself) (Harris, 2020, p.). This archetype,

while it seeks to counter the Mammy, Jezebel, and welfare queen, can also aid in emotional and

physical decline. Therefore, the practicing counselor must recognize and be capable of treating

racial battle fatigue, race lighting, and the pet-to-threat phenomenon. Dr. Kecia Thomas, a former

University of Georgia professor, created the *pet-to-threat* term in 2013 to describe the

phenomenon of Black women who received and benefited from the support of leaders (White

males) early in their careers only to experience a change in their leader's attitudes as they became more confident and competent in their roles (Thomas et al., 2013).

Additionally, this study used Black feminist thought as a theoretical framework and experienced positives for the participants in their ability to express their narratives. Therefore, it may be supportive for practicing counselors to utilize the Black feminist thought lens paired with person-centered therapy, especially when counseling with this population. While it may not be wise to use BFT perspectives in therapy solely as therapeutic modalities (i.e., psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive) that seek to help a client change and overcome problems in a prescribed manner, BFT is a useful lens by which to understand, acknowledge, and intervene based on the clients' life experiences. Within a Black feminist, therapeutic perspective, a lens is a multifaceted concept of beliefs, values, and assumptions based on how clients and other stakeholders experience and interpret their psychological realities, challenges, and strengths. The Black feminist lens assumes that therapist engages in the process of observing and experiencing Black women in their natural environments or within the confines of their reality and thus acceptance and our ability to relate with genuineness with each other (Jones & Harris, 2019). Consequently, the Black feminist lens shapes the fundamental ethos of therapy toward one that is more open to the life experiences of others, more self-reflective about the limitations of one's knowledge, and ultimately more acknowledging of diversity and personal responsibility through the use of dialogue.

Van Kalmthout (1998) described person-centered as an interpersonal theory from which problems are conceptualized as relational: the relationship is of utmost importance in the process. Theorists believe that the degree to which individuals experience incongruence creates internal tension or conflict, a form of anxiety characterized by denying or distorting experiences that

contradict one's self-concept (Rogers, 1980). This incongruence is also assessed in BFT through knowledge production, Matrix of Oppression, negative historical images of Black women, and the connection to public policy (Collins, 2000). This speaks to the purpose of BFT enhancing the voice of Black women to create their standpoint and transfer information to other Black women necessary for survival.

Implications for Counselor Education Programs

The findings from this study spotlight the phenomenon of "sophisticated racism," as explored by Victoria Showunmi and Carol Tomlin, and serve to help examine the prevalent and normative process of marginalizing the voices, contributions, and visibility of Black women educators within higher education (Showunmi, 2023). Therefore, there is an essential need for counselor education programs to embed modules on academic and gendered racism that is housed within systemic racism and systemic structures, specifically highlighting Black women in that curriculum. This is a clear and acceptable approach as it has been done for other groups such as individuals with disabilities, Native Americans, LGBTQIA+, Hispanics, Alaskan Americans, and Blacks, as indicated in courses, such as diversity and social justice. In these courses, microaggressions, biases, privilege, oppression, cultural identity, and White identity models are discussed in modules. These courses also introduce advocacy and call for a leadership and advocacy project. Courses such as these would serve as inclusive and demonstrate Black women as mattering in spaces that have not traditionally been open and accepting to them, their work, and their position. Currently, BWCEs in HWIs and in higher education are a social justice issue that needs education and a call to action. Understanding the value of this is vital to the infrastructure of today's fabric. In June Jordan's (2005) *Poem about My Rights*, she stated, I am not wrong: Wrong is not my name. My Name is my own, and I can't tell you who the hell set

things up like this, but I can tell you that from now on, my resistance, my simple and daily and

nightly self-determination may very well cost you your life. (lines 109-114)

What June is saying here speaks to the lack of awareness of administrators, deans, and

other leadership individuals regarding the negative impacts on the minds and bodies of Black

women. With that said, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), Black

women make up only about 4% of full-time faculty in the academy and even less in counselor

education at HWI. Without changes in structures and curricula to include their narratives as a

way to decrease impairments in their careers and increase successful promotion and tenure, they

will resign; as Dr. Blue said, "I can always open up my private practice as a licensed professional

counselor."

Recommendation for Future Research

This qualitative research study explored the lived experiences of tenured Black women

counselor educators to understand how they thrive in those spaces and places. Future research

that will enhance the lives of current and future BWCEs would include focus groups where they

can build sustainability practices for themselves first and then others as a part of their innate roles

of other mothering. It would also help to prioritize research on the positives that ensure their

attainment of being recruited, retained, and promoted. The data are precise with the barriers and

the negative impacts of racism, sexism, intra-racism, and microaggressions on their mind, body,

and soul. It is time to focus on what is needed to walk through the hoops instead of jumping

through them.

Furthermore, our conversations revealed various feelings, motivations, perceptions, and

attitudes regarding the journey of tenured Black women counselor educators at historically White

institutions in geographically different places across the southern and northern United States.

Therefore, it is essential to research how geography plays a role in how BWCEs are perceived for their intellect and how they are respected in certain institutions in certain states. The heightened issues that affect Black people and Black women in specific geographical locations could influence their lived experiences. It was noted through the interviews that BWCE's personal needs and professional aspirations played a significant role in this process. One of the main reasons the participants selected institutions was due to external support systems.

Study Summary

This study aimed to highlight the positive experiences that tenured BWCEs had at HWIs with the intent to share so that other and future BWCEs could increase their potential and emotional, mental, and physical selves in those spaces. All participants described their university experience as good. Most of them disliked the systemic processes of becoming tenured at the institution, and others had to negotiate strongly to become tenured after having acquired tenure and promotion one to two other times before this. They all realized they could do hard things and were braver and more robust than they had imagined; they had to be in situations that caused them to wail. Black women are resilient and robust. This study additionally confirms that Black women use adversity as fuel, thus helping them develop the necessary skills to prepare them for tenure, promotion, and leadership in some of the participants' experiences. The resilience drives their strength through adversity manifested as motivation factors such as family and relationships, mentorship and sponsorship, and the support of cultural identity and diversity within and outside of the academy (Chance, 2022). Those things that otherwise make them "othered" or the outsider within are then decreased and become armor. In the end, they were women who listened, who held space for themselves, and allowed space for others through their lived experiences.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Email

Subject: Reimagining Research with Black Women Counselor Educators

Hello, Dr. Participant,

And thank you for opening this email. As a tenured Black woman counselor educator, are you wondering how your experiences can help establish change in higher education, in White spaces, and in the lives of future Black women counselor educators? Have you ever wondered how your lived experiences can model the reimagination of success in those same spaces? Have you thought to yourself that with the small number of you who are tenured and seeking your space and pace, there is an unmet need to aid you in acquiring systemic peace? If any of these thoughts or versions of these thoughts have crossed your mind, this research is an opportunity to reimagine yourself in Historically White Institutional spaces.

My name is Tonja Simmons Lee, and I am seeking to hold that space for Black Women Counselor educators who serve at Historically White Institutions through my research toward the completion of my doctoral dissertation at the University of Georgia under the guidance of Dr. Brandee Appling! It is titled ***Women Listening: Exploring The Lived Experiences of Tenured Black Women Counselor Educators at Historically White Institutions.***

Thank you again for the opportunity to share. I have for you the requirements below. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Are you a tenured Black woman and counselor educator at a historically White institution?

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of tenured Black women who are counselor educators at historically White institutions (HWIs).

Requirements:

- ***Identify As A Black Woman***

- *Possess Tenure*

- *Identify As A Counselor Educator*

- *Teaches At A Historically White Institution*

Commitment: This study will include a 60-90 minute virtual interview and a 60-minute focus group (via Zoom).

If interested, please email or contact Tonja Simmons at <u>Tonja.simmons@uga.edu</u> and 478-XXXXXXX.

I appreciate your consideration!

Tonja S. Lee, Ed.S, LPC, NCC, CPCS
Ph.D. Candidate | Counselor Education and Supervision
Mary Frances Early College of Education
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APPENDIX B

Recruitment Flyer

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM

Women Listening: Exploring The Lived Experiences of Tenured Black Women Counselor Educators at Historically White Institutions.

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you information about the study so you can decide whether to participate. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything unclear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide whether you want to be in the study. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigators: Dr. Brandee Appling, Primary Investigator
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
bappling@uga.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX

Tonja Simmons, Student Co-Investigator
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
Tonja.simmons@uga.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of a Black woman counselor educator (BWCEs) at a historically White institution (HWI) and understand how their experiences can increase the number of BWCEs at HWIs and change the policies and procedures for the future of BWCEs.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to …

- Participate in a one-time, audio-recorded interview through Zoom with the primary researcher, ranging from thirty minutes to an hour.
- Participants will be asked to participate in a one-time, audio-recorded focus group through Zoom with the primary researcher for 60 minutes.
- Participants will be expected to review the transcriptions of their interviews as created by the primary researcher for feedback. The primary researcher will provide participants with the transcriptions in person or via email, fax, or postal service.
- Overall, participants can expect to contribute two hours of their time toward this study.

- Participants will be asked to share their experiences as a tenured Black Woman Counselor Educator at a Historically White Institution (HWI).
- Participants may be asked questions such as "As a tenured BWCE, what have been your experiences in counselor education at a HWI?"

Risks and discomforts
- There may be psychological risks associated with this study, such as feelings of stress when discussing their experiences as tenured Black women counselor educators at HWIs.
- Participants will be informed of psychological and social risks before the study and may discontinue participation at any time during and after the interview has concluded.

Benefits
- Providing a safe space for BWCEs to discuss their lived experiences as they relate to being a Black woman in counselor education at a historically White institution that may not have been addressed until this study was provided.
- Benefits from this study include discovering new ways to advocate and address the needs of BWCEs, the need for BWCEs, and the need for them to be in spaces and places previously not allowed so that they can speak to the need for prioritized and intentional hiring of them on the tenure track at HWIs.
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Incentives for participation
For your participation, you will be entered into a drawing for a $50 gift card. You do not have to be in the study to enter the drawing. Send an email to tonja.simmons@uga.edu to enter the drawing if you do not want to be in the study. Your name will be provided to the investigator's departmental business office for tracking purposes if you win.

Audio/Video Recording
This research study requires the audio taping of interviews and transcriptions of each interview to analyze the content the participant presents after the interview has concluded. The primary researcher, Tonja Simmons, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia, will review the tapes and can be contacted at 478-XXX-XXXX or tonja.simmons@uga.edu. All recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study. This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

Please provide your initials below if you understand that this interview will be audio-recorded.

_____ I understand my interview will be audio-recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality
Upon completion of the interviews, participants' identifiable information will be removed after the participant has had an opportunity to review the interview transcription and replaced with new identifiers that disguise the participant's identity. The information will not be used in any future research. Participants have the option to discontinue participation in the study at any time.

This includes retracting the information provided during the interview, including the days after the

interview has concluded up until publication. Individually-identifiable information from the tapes is confidential; however, additional exceptions to confidentiality are:

1) You inform me in writing to discuss your situation with someone else.
2) You are determined to be a threat to yourself or others.
3) I am ordered by a court to disclose information.
4) There is an indication of child abuse that I am legally required to report.

Taking part is voluntary
Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

Participant rights
The study's main researcher is Tonja Simmons, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Tonja Simmons at tonja.simmons@uga.edu or 478-954-9285. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or read this entire consent form and had all your questions answered.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Please keep one copy and return the signed copy to the researcher.

APPENDIX D

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. Please state your desired pseudonym and current title.
2. Describe your recruitment process for your current position
     a. Describe any aspects of the college or institution that enhanced your decision to accept the offer. Describe any red flags or apprehensions you had prior to accepting the offer.
3. What has been your positive experience as a tenured Black woman Counselor Educator (BWCE) at a Historically White Institution (HWI)?
4. What has been your positive experience with students in your college and/or department? Can you share specific examples?
5. What has been your positive experience with faculty colleagues in your college and/or department? Can you share specific examples?
6. Describe your source of support in helping you navigate your college, department, and the promotion and tenure process.
7. Describe your college and department's academic and workplace culture. Would you provide examples that led to your assessment of the culture?
8. What would you offer to other tenured BWCEs and those on the tenure track at HWIs?
9. What would you offer to deans, department heads, and other counselor educator stakeholders who are invested in recruitment, retention, and overall success of BWCE at HWIs?
10. Is there anything else you want to share that describes your lived experiences as a tenured BWCE at an HWI?

Thank you for your insights and participation in this interview. Once the interview is transcribed, I will return to you to check for accuracy in your response. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions.