When They See Us: The Lived Experiences of Tenured Black Male Faculty at Research 1 Institutions

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WHEN THEY SEE US: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TENURED BLACK MALE FACULTY AT RESEARCH 1 INSTITUTIONS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my late mother, Stacey Evette Cureton. I love you, and I miss you dearly. This poem is dedicated in memory of my mother.

Mother to Son by Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
    It’s had tacks in it,
    And splinters,
    And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
    Bare.
    But all the time
    I’s been a-climbin’ on,
    And reachin’ landin’s,
    And turnin’ corners,
And sometimes goin’ in the dark
    Where there ain’t been no light.
    So boy, don’t you turn back.
Don’t you set down on the steps
    ’Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.
    Don’t you fall now—
    For I’s still goin’, honey,
    I’s still climbin’,
And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.
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ABSTRACT

Numerous research studies have been conducted on the experiences of Black faculty, faculty of color, and Black female faculty in the academy. However, there is still a lack of knowledge about the lived experiences of Black male faculty, especially the lived experiences of tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 (R1) institutions. There remains a dearth of research that examines and amplifies voice to the experiences of tenured Black male faculty. It is essential to understand how Black male faculty have navigated their way through earning the rank of tenure at an R1 institution. This research provides a roadmap for future Black male faculty on the tenure track at R1 institutions and for other Black males who may want to enter the professoriate on the tenure track. This research also informs administrators with practical ideas and solutions that they can implement to make the tenure-track process more inclusive for Black male faculty. The author used counter-storytelling from Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the methodological framework to guide this qualitative study of 13 tenured Black male faculty at R1 institutions. The key findings were that Black male faculty find the motivation to succeed from various sources, including the Black Community and their academic community. There was also a need for Black male faculty to ask questions about the tenure process before taking a job with an R1 institution. Because community is such a significant factor in the success of Black male faculty pursuing tenure at R1 institutions, leaders of those institutions should work to build meaningful supports and opportunities for collaboration and mentoring among faculty members.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRT ........................................................................................................ Critical Race Theory

R1 ........................................................................................................ Research 1 Institution
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Black male professors are severely underrepresented at predominantly white institutions (PWI) across the United States (U.S.). Approximately 80% of all full-time faculty (men and women) are white in the academy (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2022). According to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (USDOE, 2022), the total percentage of Black male full-time professors was 3% in the fall of 2018, which was significantly lower than their white male counterparts, who represented 40% of those in the professoriate. The percentage of Black male professors drops even lower when discussing those tenured at Research 1 (R1) institutions (Modica & Mamiseishvili, 2010). Harper & Davis (2012) noted that “despite the size of the 259 research universities in the U.S., 42.1% employed 10 or fewer Black male faculty (across all disciplines and ranks).” In addition, much of the research aggregates the experiences of Black male and female professors (Griffin et al., 2013), which is problematic because it does not address the intersectional experiences of being both Black and male in these spaces. For years, institutions have committed to diversifying their faculties, but at many institutions, changes have been slow, and efforts have fallen short of their promises (Warde, 2009). Scholars have noted that higher education institutions must work towards diversifying their student body to create an institutional environment that values and supports diversity (Antonio, 2003; Warde,
Having a diverse faculty on campus increases the prevalence of diverse thoughts and experiences students can learn from.

**Studies That Have Addressed the Problem**

A large body of literature explores the underrepresentation of Black professors at PWIs (Louis & Freeman, 2018; Kelly et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2013). Griffin et al. (2011) found that the small number of Black professors at predominantly white institutions places them at a disadvantage because they are often pulled away from their research and publishing responsibilities and recruited in services related to campus diversity. Black professors are also frequently called to engage students and provide advising and support on personal and professional development issues (Griffin et al., 2013). Moreover, Black professors often encounter structural racism by devaluing their academic scholarship, particularly when they focus on underserved communities (Stanley, 2006; Warde, 2009). In many cases, this institutional climate could leave Black professors in the challenging position of deciding if they should pursue the research that is important to them or if they should conduct research deemed acceptable by their colleagues, institutional policies, and policymakers (Griffin et al., 2012). Adding those additional tasks often takes away from the scholarship component of the tenure-track process.

**Deficiencies in the Studies**

While much literature explores Black faculty’s challenges overall, few examine the nuanced challenges Black male professors face based on their race-gender identity. In a study of the social exchange between Black professors and Black students, Griffin et al. (2013) concluded that “the ways in which the experiences and responses of Black faculty
vary based on their gender certainly should be explored in future research” (p.507). This study fills that gap because it investigated how Black male professors have successfully navigated through different stages of the tenure and promotion process while coping with obstacles they have encountered.

**Problem Statement**

A disproportionately low number of Black males are tenured in the academy across institutional types compared to their white counterparts (Louis & Freeman, 2018). In examining R1 institutions specifically, there is an even more compelling gap between the number of Black male tenured faculty and white tenured faculty (Griffin et al., 2014). This issue is evident in the doctoral pipeline. According to the annual United States Survey of Earned Doctorates, an estimated 55,195 doctorates were awarded in 2018 (National Science Foundation [NSF], 2018). More than half of these degrees (i.e., 28,585) were awarded to white people, and only 3,603 were awarded to Black/African American candidates, demonstrating great inequality in degree attainment (NSF, 2018). The same survey found that 4,976 doctorate earners who secured full-time faculty positions were white (NSF, 2018).

Meanwhile, less than 10% of that (i.e., 462) were Black. Wring-Mair & Ramos (2021) note that “this data suggests that most academic positions during this survey cycle went to white doctorate earners, ensuring they remain the majority in academic positions (p.85)”. The racial gap in the doctoral pipeline, and subsequently among those who secure academic positions and earn tenure, presents a multi-layered recruitment, retention, and promotion issue on college campuses affecting Black males on the tenure-track, Black male doctoral students who aspire for tenure-track faculty roles, Black
students who seek mentorship from Black faculty, and non-Black students who thrive in a multicultural educational environment. Institutions without diverse faculty perpetuate systems and structures built and sustained by white supremacy, not inclusive of various backgrounds, perspectives, and lived experiences that benefit all students (Stanley, 2006). For institutions to become more equitable and inclusive, it requires a commitment to learning about the lived experiences of tenured Black male faculty and using that data to inform recruitment, retention, and promotion efforts. Such work is imperative to move higher education institutions forward and create systemic change for Black male faculty in the professoriate at PWIs.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the lived experiences of tenured Black male professors during their tenure-track process at R1 institutions. At this stage in the research, the tenure-track process is defined as the length of time, generally, 5-6 years, in which a tenure-track faculty member holds the title “Assistant Professor” and is actively seeking tenure, an appointment that lasts until retirement age, except for dismissal with just cause (Okech & Rubel, 2018). This study asked tenured Black male professors to reflect on tenure-track processes. First, I explored the tenure experiences of Black male professors at R1 institutions to collect information that may benefit other Black males pursuing a career as tenure-track professors. Second, I explored the role of mentoring and support systems for tenured Black male professors at R1 institutions and examined the effectiveness of mentorship on the retention of tenured Black male professors. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was applied as the theoretical framework. More
specifically, counter-storytelling was the central tenet utilized to amplify the voices of
tenured Black male professors at R1 institutions.

**Research Questions**

It was important to explore Black male professors’ experiences in the academy
during the tenure-track process to expand the literature on the lived experiences of
tenured Black male professors. I studied 13 tenured Black male professors at R1
institutions across the U.S. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white
   Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?
2. What role has mentorship played in the experiences of Black male professors
   at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?
3. What recommendations would tenured Black male professors offer to aspiring
   Black male professors pursuing the professoriate on the tenure track?

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for numerous reasons. Black male professors have and
still encounter a variety of challenges at PWIs. For instance, Black male professors
consistently receive lower ratings from white students on their teaching evaluations than
their white counterparts (Wright-Mair & Museus., 2021; McGowan, 2022; Stanley, 2006;
Williams, 2007). Williams (2007) stated that “the problem of racially motivated negative
evaluations does not end with racist students; it is an institutional problem, as colleagues
and administrators are often unequipped and unwilling to recognize and to deal with
racism.” In other words, institutional structures are designed and maintained by
administrators (i.e., President, Provost, Deans, and Department Chairs) that perpetuate
systems of oppression by upholding teaching evaluations during tenure and promotion. Whether or not administrators are aware, these evaluations can adversely affect Black male professors earning tenure in the academy. Black male professors also receive pushback from white male students, particularly when teaching about race and racism in the classroom (Stanley, 2006). In addition, Black male professors often experience microaggressions daily, specifically regarding their intelligence and fitness for the position (Louis & Freeman, 2018). Moreover, Black male professors must overcome the challenges of feeling invisible and isolated when they are the only Black professor or Black male professor in their department (Louis & Freeman, 2018; Constantine et al., 2008). Finally, there is still a disproportionately low number of Black male professors being recruited, promoted, and retained when compared to their counterparts (Louis & Freeman, 2018).

However, some Black male professors are still achieving success despite the roadblocks, and their stories must be told. There is not enough nuanced research on tenured Black male professors at R1 institutions. There is a need for their lived experiences and recommendations to be shared in the academy. Their wisdom can be incredibly impactful for Black males aspiring to become tenured professors at an R1 institution, including Black male doctoral students with aspirations to land a tenure-track role in the academy once they complete their studies. Furthermore, Black students and Black male students are not the only ones who benefit from having Black male professors in the classroom. Non-Black students also thrive when exposed to a multicultural educational environment, especially since the world outside of the walls of PWI is more diverse than what we may see on a college campus (McGee, 2020). Lastly, R1
institutions and non-research-intensive institutions will learn what administrators (i.e., Presidents, Provosts, Deans, and Department Chairs) can do to improve the experiences of Black males on the tenure track.

**Definitions and Related Concepts**

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study.

1. **Black/African American**- Refers to individuals who self-identify with one or more ethnicities or national origins of African decedent (United States Census Bureau, 2020).

2. **Counter-Storytelling**- A method of telling a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority; majoritarian narratives are also recognized as stories and not assumed to be facts or the truth (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997).

3. **Desegregation**- is the process that removes the formal and informal barriers preventing students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds from learning in the same classrooms and schools. The policy ensures that all children have equitable learning opportunities (Lomotey, 2009).

4. **Tenure-track professors**- Tenure-track faculty members are seeking tenure and hold the title “Assistant Professor.” (Murray et al., 2020)

5. **Tenured professors**- Tenured faculty members hold indefinite tenure in one or more campus units and hold the title “Associate Professor” or “Professor”. A
tenured professor has an appointment that lasts until retirement age, except for dismissal with just cause. (Okech & Rubel, 2018).

6. **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**- according to the Higher Education Act of 1965- are those postsecondary educational institutions established before 1964 with the mission of educating African American students. During the period of Jim Crow segregation, these institutions represented, for most African Americans, the only realistic opportunity for them to receive a college education. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* (1954), many observers predicted and called for the elimination of HBCUs because these schools were the most visible vestige of the separate-but-unequal systems of higher education that had served to deny African Americans equal educational opportunities. However, not only have HBCUs continued to exist, but they also play significant roles in ensuring access to educational opportunities for African Americans (Lomotey, 2009).

7. **Predominantly white institution (PWI)**- is the term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment. However, most of these institutions may also be understood as historically white institutions in recognition of the binarism and exclusion supported by the United States before 1964. In a historical context of segregated education, predominantly white colleges and universities are defined and contrasted with other colleges and universities that serve students with different racial, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds (e.g., historically Black colleges and
universities, HBCUs). U.S. higher education is rooted in establishing the predominantly white college but has changed and proliferated (Lomotey, 2009).

8. **Research 1 (R1) institutions** – Institutions with high research activity. A total of 131 institutions are classified as R1 (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions, 2018).

**Summary**

The intent of this narrative study was to understand the lived experiences of tenured Black male professors during their tenure-track process at R1 institutions. This research study informed Black males on the tenure track at R1 institutions and those who are pursuing or will pursue a doctoral degree. Moreover, this study enhanced administrators’ understanding of what their institutions are doing well and what systemic improvements are necessary to better serve Black male professors holistically. Furthermore, this study highlighted the critical development of Black males entering the academy to pursue the professoriate as a career. I used CRT as the theoretical framework for this study to amplify the voices and illuminate the experiences of tenured Black male professors at R1 institutions. The next chapter will review the literature on Black males, the experiences of Black professors, an overview of the tenure track process, and explore what research has been conducted on tenured Black male professors in the academy.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a literature review on theoretical and empirical research related to the lived experiences of Black males in the academy and, more specifically, Black male faculty. This chapter will first explore factors that shape and impact Black male adolescents, Black males in undergraduate, Black male graduate students, and Black faculty in higher education. Attention was given to barriers and challenges that Black male faculty face while earning tenure. Emphasis was placed on the need for research focused on Black male faculty. An overview of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is provided. Lastly, this study was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?

2. What role has mentorship played in the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?

3. What recommendations would tenured Black male professors offer to aspiring Black male professors pursuing the professoriate on the tenure track?

Black Male Adolescents

Black boys start to learn, deal with, and process microaggressions at an early age (Smith et al., 2020). When you think about Black boys navigating microaggressions in education, you hardly think about their experiences in elementary or middle school. Often, Black boys are left navigating those white spaces earlier than many realize.
Unfortunately, Black boys are stereotyped way before stepping foot on a college campus. They start facing barriers and challenges, knowingly or unknowingly, at an early age in their education journey. Henfield (2011) found in his qualitative case study analysis of five self-identified Black males in the eighth grade that the participants were aware of the racial microaggressions in their schools. One participant noted that some educators could better understand and show an appreciation for Black culture. Another participant spoke about how he disliked the lack of Black cultural representation at the middle school (Henfield, 2011).

These findings amplify the lack of holistic support for making Black boys feel welcomed in white schools. The results also revealed that microaggressions for Black boys start as early as middle school and never seem to go away as they move throughout their education. Especially for Black boys who become Black men navigating white spaces in undergraduate and graduate school. Furthermore, Henfield (2011) noted that school counselors could aid in providing counseling sessions for Black boys on the receiving end of racial microaggressions. However, understanding their challenges will still be difficult if the counselors are white and cannot relate to the students.

Moreover, the solution should be educating the teachers, administrators, and staff about the issue in school and creating a plan to decrease the problem. That could be hiring more Black teachers, especially Black male teachers. Along with hiring more Black guidance counselors to be a listening ear for Black boys and provide them with tools to thrive in white spaces as they continue their education journey.

With more significant knowledge about Black men in college, we often forget about their experience in high school, along with learning about their lofty aspirations to
earn a college degree and identifying the challenges they face coming from different walks of life. Strayhorn (2009) conducted a quantitative study to measure the influence of urbanicity (e.g., urban vs. suburban vs. rural) on the educational aspirations of Black males in high school. Strayhorn revealed that high-achieving Black males from higher socioeconomic, suburban backgrounds tend to have the highest educational aspirations. The study also suggested that Black males had relatively low educational aspirations, and the majority (53%) attended urban schools. However, the more significant questions that remain unknown are centered around the lived experiences of Black males who attended these high schools. Other than their environment and school location, it would be essential to know more about the make-up of their teachers and the type of mentoring programs or lack of mentoring programs offered to support them in urban schools. However, we know that parents’ education is a crucial variable regarding socioeconomic status. It does not mean that Black boys in urban schools are not academically successful and do not have high aspirations for educational achievement.

Furthermore, a qualitative study would allow for the voices of the Black boys to be heard and would provide a better understanding of the challenges they face in school, if there is really a lack of high aspirations for education, or if Black boys are just being overlooked because of the environment that they come from. For Black boys, growing up in an urban environment could be the barrier they have to overcome due to stereotypes placed upon them. However, overcoming those barriers and challenges are not theirs alone. Schools, parents, and other community members must remind Black boys that they can be anything they put their minds to and that their education is vital for future endeavors like attending college.
Academic Achievement and Barriers in Undergraduate Education

Black males are often stereotyped as not caring about their education (Harper, 2009; Marsh & Noguera, 2018). The image that is painted throughout society is of a drug dealer, gang member, athlete, or academic failure (Hester & Gray, 2018; Kurinec & Weaver, 2021; Taylor et al., 2019). However, Black boys and Black men are way more than the deficit picture that the media displays (Jenkins, 2006). For instance, Harper and Davis (2012) conducted a study analyzing essays written by 304 Black male participants from 209 colleges and universities around the United States, along with a focus group that included 10 Academy Scholars during their campus visit to Penn GSE.

The findings from this study revealed a unique perspective on Black male students’ encounters with and responses to inequitable schooling: 1) awareness of educational inequities, 2) beliefs in education as the great equalizer, and 3) purposeful pursuits of the Ph.D. in education (Harper & Davis, 2012). The participants understood that education was a key to their success and that their parents preached to them the importance of education as the great equalizer in America. Another interesting fact about this study was how the participants believed that pursuing a Ph.D. would break the cycle of poverty and how educational attainment could inspire others to do the same. Harper and Davis (2012) stated that Black men care about education. Regardless of how unfairly they are disadvantaged, they have not lost hope in earning degrees and using their education to uplift others around them. It is essential to note the role that family plays in the lives of Black boys and Black men pushing themselves to pursue more education, along with how the family is situated as their intrinsic motivation for pursuing degrees to better the lives of family members surrounding them.
College achievement for Black men is not unusual. However, Black men are usually viewed as incapable by society’s narrative (Harper & Davis, 2012). Moreover, Black men have worked and are still working on writing their counternarratives to amplify their voices and share their experiences in the education pipeline. That includes their college achievement and what factors play a role in their academic success. Harper (2008) phenomenological study sought to understand the lived experience of a high-achieving Black male college student at large PWIs and wanted to know more about the relationship with and support derived from others. The sample for this study included 32 Black male college students from six universities. Harper found that same-race peer support was vital for Black male students’ academic achievement at six universities. Harper (2008) offered practical implications that could be beneficial to university administrators, and those are: 1) provide financial and otherwise support for Black clubs and minority student groups as they play a pivotal role in leadership development for Black leaders on campus. 2) Given the Historically Black fraternities’ role in offering social support and academic encouragement to Black male undergraduates, administrators should prioritize sustaining these organizations. These organizations are critical for supporting Black males who join or are interested in joining. 3) Administrators should set aside funds to send Black students to conferences and participate in leadership retreats. Lastly, 4) programming around conversations to bring together different Black student subgroups to discuss the importance of peer support and address internalized racism. Black men do excel academically, especially when surrounded by support. More specifically, same-race peer support and being a part of a Greek letter organization are prime examples of the kind of support that pushes Black
men to achieve in all areas of life, including academically (Harper, 2007; Harper, 2009; Harper & Davis, 2012; Johnson & Strayhorn, 2022; Strayhorn, 2014; Strayhorn, 2017). Furthermore, colleges and universities must look at their institutions to see how well of a job they are doing at providing support for Black men and being honest and intentional about making the necessary changes to do so.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been the saving grace for Black students since they were established in the 19th century (Albritton, 2012). Today, they remain a place where Black students can find support for holistic development, especially for Black men who enter college as traditional or nontraditional college students. HBCUs are places where Black men find that high-achievement and social support to the norm among those who walk “the yard” across various campuses. For instance, Goings (2016) investigated the academic and social experiences of four nontraditional, high-achieving, Black male undergraduates attending one HBCU. The findings from this study revealed that the participants were intrinsically motivated to make a better future for themselves and their families. Support from their peers, family members, and children were a significant part of their success. Lastly, the campus environment affirmed the participants’ identities as Black males and nontraditional students (Goings, 2016). These findings highlight that Black men can and will be successful on campus when campuses cultivate an environment that is welcoming to those who enter college regardless of if they are a traditional or nontraditional college student.

Furthermore, PWIs administrators can learn from HBCUs when it comes to creating an environment where Black males are seen and valued. Especially for Black
males who are not student-athletes and those who enter college as nontraditional.
Investing in Black male undergraduates is crucial to their tenure throughout their four years of college. It could play a critical role in their pursuit of earning a graduate degree, doctorate, or even pursuing the professoriate as a career.

**Black Male Doctoral Students**

Edward Alexander Boucher graduated from Yale University with a doctorate in physics in 1876; Dr. Boucher was the first Black person to earn a doctoral degree from a postsecondary institution in the United States (Felder, 2015). Several years later, W.E.B. Du Bois became the first Black student to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University. Although Edward Boucher and W.E.B. Du Bois broke the color barriers in the Ivy League, we still have a long road ahead. Gasman (2022) noted that between 2011 and 2018, Black students across all institutions in the United States made up 6% of earned PhDs and that their white counterparts made up 48% of those who earned PhDs nationwide. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of Black men in doctoral programs is largely attributed to their low attainment rates at earlier phases in the postsecondary educational pipeline (Harper & Palmer, 2016). Over 65% of Black males who enter college do not graduate within six years (Harper, 2008).

Platt and Hilton (2017) noted that the eligible pool of potential Black male doctoral students has decreased with many Black male students not graduating at the high school and collegiate levels. For many scholars, persisting beyond the baccalaureate means jumping the hurdles of a standardized test (i.e., GRE, MCAT, GMAT, and LSAT) to gain access to graduate programs and professional degrees (Griffin et al., 2012; Harper & Porter, 2012; Harper & Newman, 2016; Kidder et al., 2001; Scott & Shaw, 1985).
With Black students being among the lowest scoring for standardized tests, this hurdle continues to hold back many Black students, specifically Black male students (Harper & Newman, 2016). However, Black male doctoral students have prevailed through many trials and tribulations (i.e., lack of Black faculty mentors, lack of research support, being the only Black student, etc.) to achieve the goal of earning a doctorate.

**Black Male Doctoral Students and Racial Microaggressions**

Racial microaggressions are subtle insults and (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) exchanges directed towards people of color, consciously or unconsciously (Pierce et al., 1978; Sue et al., 2006; Sue et al., 2007; Solorzano et al., 2000). Racial microaggressions appear in three forms: microinsults, microinvalidations, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions include but are not limited to remarks such as, “I don’t think of you as Black” (Solorzano et al., 2001) or “My grandparents came here with nothing, too, but they worked hard to get ahead in life” (Gallagher, 2003). These types of racial microaggressions remarks are commonly manifested by white individuals (Constatine et al., 2008). “When racial microaggressions occur, they present highly charged racial situations that challenge both teachers and students alike” (Sue et al., 2007, p.137). Students of color have noted that racial microaggressions are patterns of being overlooked, underrepresented, and devalued because of their race (Sue et al., 2007).

Through historical institutional practices, racism such as slavery, the Black Codes, and Jim Crow Laws were overtly part of early American U.S. culture. However, racism still exists and shows up in the form of microaggressions. While microaggressions may seem minor and insignificant to the offender, it has a different effect on the ones receiving it. For example, Ingram’s (2013) research study used the lens of Critical Race
Theory to examine the experiences of Black male doctoral students attending PWIs. In a qualitative study, Ingram (2013) interviewed 18 Black male doctoral students. The findings indicated that the participants shared that racial microaggressions and stereotypes from white counterparts impacted their experiences in and outside of the classroom. Moreover, they had feelings of alienation, isolation, and self-defeating beliefs (Ingram, 2013). Which ultimately had a negative impact on their experience and their mindset as doctoral students. For Black male doctoral students experiencing these feelings while enduring a rigorous process can be detrimental. Especially when Black male doctoral students are expected to be competitive as their white counterparts.

Researching Black male doctoral students is critical to understanding their lived experiences. That includes understanding and examining those experiences from a critical lens like CRT. For instance, Watkins and McGowan (2020) conducted a study on 16 Black men doctoral scientists and engineers using racial battle fatigue as their theoretical framework. Interestingly enough, Watkins and McGowan (2020) discovered that the 16 Black men doctoral scientist and engineers deemed relationships with Black peers both in and outside their program communities pivotal to their successful doctoral matriculation and career success. Moreover, the findings revealed that Black peers helped to navigate engagements and counter racism in their programs (Watkins & McGowan, 2020). Furthermore, emergent themes from relationships with same-race peers highlighted that the culture of Black students having their success train, Black peers keeping each other interested in STEM, and Black peers sharing the same struggle motivated each other to keep thriving. This amplifies the importance of intentionally creating space for Black male doctoral students to connect with same-race peers. That includes recruiting Black
students and Black male doctoral students in these spaces to build relationships with each other and aid each other through navigating their successful doctoral matriculation.

Black male doctoral students are often faced with being the only Black male or the only person of color in their doctoral program department. That comes with many challenges when navigating dissertation research topics focusing on race and racism (Ingram, 2016; Scott & Johnson, 2021). Especially when you lack access to a Black advisor in your department that understands and supports the importance of your work. Platt and Hilton (2017) conducted a qualitative study with nine Black male doctoral students at PWIs to better understand the experiences and social and intellectual processes within doctoral programs in education and the social sciences. Their findings revealed that Black male doctoral students connect their research agenda to community’s needs to address racial components of their research as critical and necessary. Black male doctoral students receive pushback when navigating the doctoral program. Moreover, Black male doctoral students lack support for community-based research, meaning the Black community. Lack of support towards one’s research agenda makes the doctoral process even harder. That puts pressure on Black male doctoral students to choose between the work they are passionate about or changing their research agenda to please advisors or other dissertation committee members.

Furthermore, the lack of Black male faculty to serve as dissertation advisors and mentors is part of the issue with Black male doctoral students, more specifically, at PWIs, where Black male faculty make up less than 6% of the total faculty on campus. Supporting Black male doctoral students starts with ensuring they have access to advisors
and mentors on campus who look like them and are willing to support their research that is optionally tied to their communities.

**Black Male Doctoral Student Socialization**

Socialization is the process through which one becomes a part of a group, organization, or community (Austin, 2002). Preparing future faculty starts when doctoral students begin graduate school learning the values, norms, and expectations of the group they are being socialized into (Bieber & Worley, 2006; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Platt, 2012; Rosser, 2003). During the socialization process, graduate students experience several socialization processes: socialization to the role of a graduate student, socialization to the academic life and the profession, and socialization to a specific disciple or field (Austin, 2002). Platt, 2012 noted that a large part of socialization occurs within departments through formal and informal activities. These activities attempt to mold and define students into scholars they should become within the discipline (Chang, 2001; Platt, 2012). Platt (2012) revealed that doctoral students look towards their peers and the department’s faculty to assist in making meaning of their experiences. Doctoral socialization is important for Black male doctoral students pursuing their doctorates. Therefore, exploring the socialization experiences of Black male doctoral students at PWIs is vital to understanding how they are socialized before ever starting a tenure-track position.

Often the research done on Black male doctoral students addresses their experiences from the beginning to the end of their process. However, some Black male doctoral students get stuck at the “All but Dissertation” (ABD) status during their doctoral journey. For many, completing the coursework, comprehensive examination,
and dissertation proposal is not the hold up for finishing their degree. Moreover, it is the process of completing the study once the dissertation proposal is complete. For instance, Scott and Johnson (2021) research study investigated the educational experiences of Black male doctoral students that contributed to prolonged “ABD” status. After interviewing three Black male doctoral candidates, they discovered that racialized dynamics during doctoral education create environments that negatively impact doctoral student self-esteem and dwindle motivation to complete their doctoral studies. Furthermore, participants shared their experiences of being surveilled on campus, having their intellect questioned, and struggling to find support to conduct their research (Scott & Johnson, 2021). These findings amplify that faculty diversity is vital to the achievement of Black male doctoral students and candidates. Having access to diverse advisors and mentors will aid in completing a doctoral degree by having similar research interests, which will guide Black male doctoral students and candidates through the journey of the doctorate program. Two other recommendations offered by Scott and Johnson (2021) are ensuring that faculty provide clear and consistent feedback on student writing throughout all stages of the process. Lastly, administrators should promote spaces where marginalized students can talk about their lived experiences with race and racism—knowing that racism is endemic to education (Scott & Johnson, 2021). Providing a space where Black male doctoral students navigate those spaces in the academy could create conditions to help them prevail from doctoral candidate to doctor.

Social support during the doctoral program is important for doctoral students and even more critical for Black male doctoral students at PWIs. That social support can come from family members, friends, college peers, faculty members, or even different
organizations on campus. Unlike their white peers in doctoral programs, Black male doctoral students face the challenges of being surrounded by people like them on white campuses. For many, that support is the push that they need to get through the program successfully. For instance, McGaskey et al. (2016) investigated the various mentoring experiences that led to or hindered the success of ten Black males from five PWIs. Using a comparative case study approach, the researchers revealed that many participants developed Black social support networks. These networks provided emotional, instrumental, informational, and affirmational support for Black male doctoral students. In addition, these networks contributed to the participants’ doctoral student socialization (McGaskey et al., 2016). Not surprisingly, the findings also suggested that barriers to effective socialization still exist for Black male students. One of the most critical ways to decrease those barriers is by intentionally hiring Black faculty, specifically Black male faculty, and addressing these barriers at the institutional level down to the departmental level. To see Black male doctoral students matriculate through their doctoral programs’ institutions must be willing to hear their voices and provide them with a seat at the table to make changes that will benefit all stakeholders.

Like McGaskey et al. (2016), Johnson and Strayhorn (2022) conducted a critical race mixed-method analysis to explore the socialization experiences of Black men doctoral students in the United States. Their findings revealed that Black men perceived graduate school as a generally unwelcoming and unsupportive place; they found that participants acknowledged the role of race and racism in structuring their interpersonal relations with the campus community and that earning their Ph.D. was their divine purpose. Unfortunately, Black men in the academy are used to the struggle and have
become used to being resistant in white spaces like PWIs. However, institutions must do a better job at dismantling racism in their institutions and providing real support for Black male doctoral students entering their programs across the board.

**Black Men’s Motivation to Earning Their Doctorate**

Black male doctoral students are put in a position to work ten times as hard as their white and Asian counterparts (Ingram, 2013; Johnson & Strayhorn, 2022). However, realizing the factors that affect their decisions to consider a doctoral degree is just as important. These factors could very well be the motivation that one needs to complete their doctoral journey. Ingram (2016) conducted a study interviewing 18 African American male doctoral students pursuing doctoral degrees at three large public research PWIs. He wanted to learn how African American male doctoral students encounter and understand their aspirations for a terminal degree. The qualitative study revealed that Black male doctoral students were influenced by the need for faculty encouragement, motivation to pursue a doctorate, and their motivations (Ingram, 2016).

Furthermore, the participants in the study noted that their faculty members at their previous institution identified them as potential doctoral students. Second, they used the pursuit of the degree to better the African American community, and it was a part of their social responsibility to give back to their community. Lastly, the Black male doctoral students in this study wanted to be change agents, and earning their doctorate was a means to do so (Ingram, 2016). Like other researchers (Bingman, 2003; Carlone & Johnson, 2007), the study was consistent with the importance of giving back to underrepresented students. Moreover, it is essential to know what drives Black male doctoral students to pursue a doctorate and even more importantly, what will keep them
in their program and aid them across the stage for graduation. However, knowing that Black male doctoral students are influenced by their communities, it seems vital that they are surrounded by a like-minded community on campus. That includes other Black students, Black staff, and Black faculty members.

Many Black male doctoral students’ achievement does not come easy at PWIs. They have had to overcome stereotypes of being a minority selection for their program or being mistaken for student-athlete/athletic coach on campus. However, achievement is possible for Black male doctoral students. Understanding the factors that play a role in their success in graduating is essential for the academic achievement of other Black male doctoral students. For example, Ballard et al. (2010) interviewed five Black males who completed a doctoral program at a majority-white institution and the study sought to identify the consistent themes among successful graduates. The findings revealed that Black male doctoral students are placed in a position to counter the majoritarian stories of Black males do not succeed at the doctoral level if admitted into the program they want to advantage of the opportunity given to them. The study also highlighted those Black male doctoral students relied on “safe spaces” to get through their program. Those “safe spaces” were the faculty, nurturing environments, and cross-cultural relationships. Lastly, Black male doctoral students in this study dealt with micro-aggressions but decided to overlook the acts of racial discrimination because their will to succeed in the program was more important than the attacks made at them (Ballard et al., 2010).

Sadly, many Black male doctoral students are placed in a position where they are forced to endure racial discrimination knowingly or unknowingly. However, Black male doctoral students must remain focused on their top priority to graduate with a doctorate
and not allow the outside noise of racial micro-aggressions to stand in their way. While also understanding that creating and finding “safe spaces” is critical to their tenure as doctoral students and will be their saving grace for completing their program.

**Black Faculty in The Academy**

Black faculty are underrepresented at R1 institutions across the United States. For example, according to Gasman (2022), the highest percentage of Black tenured and tenure-track faculty in the American Association of Universities (AAU) are the University of North Carolina (5.7%), University of Illinois (4.8), Brown University and Emory University (both 4.7), and John Hopkins University and University of Virginia both (4.6%). The lowest percentages of Black faculty representing the AAU are Cal Tech (0.7), Carnegie Mellon University (1.3%), Brandeis University (1.6%), University of Colorado-Boulder (1.8%), and University of Washington (1.9%) (Gasman, 2022 p.22-23). This underrepresentation is important to consider because universities are continuing to diversify their student population and have diverse faculty, and Black faculty specifically helps all students.

**Underrepresentation and Challenges for Black Faculty**

There has been much conversation about diversifying faculty that having Black faculty is important for Black students (Griffin, 2013; Madyum, 2013; Moore et al., 2010). However, I would argue that having Black male faculty is good for all students. For example, since the early 60’s and 70’s, the underrepresentation of Black faculty has been a topic of conversation (Anderson et al., 1993). Still today, Black faculty have not closed the gap of representation at PWIs, and this research needs to be addressed by adding more literature to the academy (Glazer, 2003).
Patton and Catching (2009) stated that Black faculty have historically been underrepresented within PWIs and deal with academic isolation, marginalization of their scholarship, and racial hostility. This study focused on the experiences of 13 Black participants through examination and utilization by using counter-storytelling. Patton and Catching (2009) research highlighted that racial profiling often shaped the experiences of Black faculty at PWIs.

Scholars have found that Black faculty at PWIs experience several challenges and barriers to their success. These barriers and challenges include racism, stress, sexism, and over-committed to service (Griffin et al., 2014). For example, Edwards and Ross (2018) conducted a research study on Black faculty at PWIs at research-oriented or doctoral-granting institutions. They were able to identify concerns that caused stress, dissatisfaction, and reasons for the lack of success for Black faculty at PWIs. They found that faculty face 13 challenges at the university, department, and professional levels. These findings underscore the systemic challenges in all facets of faculty life for Black faculty and to increase the retention of Black faculty, universities must create multi-faceted systems at each of these levels to ensure they succeed.

Black faculty are not only challenged by colleagues and administrators at their institutions. For example, Thomas (2020) found that Black faculty often deal with a power struggle with white students. White students are more frequently disrespectful and challenge the competency of Black faculty while disrupting the learning environment for other students. This is a critical issue to address because Black faculty are faced with overcoming these challenges and are expected to perform at a high level. Moreover, Black faculty are being evaluated by the same students who are negatively challenging
them. Most importantly, teaching evaluations are one of the components of tenure and promotion. For Black faculty, having negative evaluations by white students could damage their possibility of earning tenure.

Black faculty are not only dealing with the known racial disparities in the tenure and promotion process (i.e., lack of diverse mentorship, biased student/peer evaluations, and disproportionately high service demands, but are also seen as a political threat to white hegemony in the academy resulting in an increase of social control. For example, Carter and Craig (2022) found that the marginalization of Black faculty directly results from maintaining white hegemony in the academy. Carter and Craig (2022) also noted that each component of the faculty work is a political act (i.e., teaching, research, service, and earning tenure). Therefore, limiting Black faculty from entering these spaces of power is one of the ways of controlling political power and sustaining white hegemony. These findings lend themselves to wanting to know more about how these political powers play a role in the tenure track process for Black male faculty at R1 institutions and how they negative around white hegemony to earn tenure.

Race plays a significant factor in the lives of Black faculty members at PWIs. However, Black faculty are situated in a campus climate where racial microaggressions are more common than not (DeCuir-Gunby, 2020; Louis, 2016). Furthermore, they are forced to create safe spaces for themselves and students of color on campus. Pittman’s (2012) case study revealed that racial microaggressions were a common and damaging facet of Black faculty lives on campus. The results from this research study highlighted that Black faculty experience racial microaggressions from a) white colleagues and b) white students.
Moreover, Black faculty are likelier to report microinvalidations from white colleagues and microinsults from white students (Pittman, 2012). Furthermore, Black faculty feel it is their responsibility to create safe spaces for students of color to push back against racial change on campus as a response to racial microaggressions (Pittman, 2012). This study further shows us racial microaggressions are prevalent on white campuses and how Black faculty are not only facing those issues but they are also guiding students of color through racial microaggressions.

**Challenges Around the Recruitment and Retention of Black Faculty**

With the conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion hires in higher education, there has been a rise in recruiting Black faculty as Assistant Professor. However, getting Black faculty is not the hard part. The problems come when institutions put more time into recruitment and less time into retaining Black faculty. For example, Kelly et al. (2017) found that 19 Black faculty reported being recruited heavily, then having to prove they were qualified to be faculty and having the lack of no institutional support in place to retain them. These findings amplify the bigger issues within the higher education environment and how poor campus climates play a role in Black faculty leaving or not being successfully retained by the institution.

Often, Black faculty are often put in situations where they must cope with classroom racial stressors. More specifically, when Black faculty are teaching in predominantly white spaces and having to overcome racially stressful work environments. For instance, Pittman (2010) found that the participants had five distinct classroom coping strategies or overt ways to dismantle racial stressors in the classrooms: a) focus on the teaching or learning goal, b) create a safe space for white students, c) use
anticipatory action, d) use assertive action to establish authority, and e) display nonreactive questioning of students’ assumptions. Although these strategies revealed in the findings of the study may be helpful for others, it is still another potential roadblock for Black faculty to overcome on a journey towards tenure that is already challenging with the current standards set by the institution. These findings bring forth another reason why Black faculty tenure and promotion packets must be reviewed from a more critical lens than their white faculty counterparts. More specifically, tenure and promotion committees must acknowledge the high service load placed on Black faculty by both the institution and students (Griffin et al., 2013).

**Resilience of Black Faculty**

Black faculty make up a very small percentage of the faculty population at R1 institutions globally. Although Black faculty are beneficial to the campus community, they are often faced with overcoming barriers at various levels. However, when faced with those barriers, it is important for Black faculty to have some tools to overcome the different challenges. For example, Alexander and Moore (2007) provided seven recommendations for thriving at PWIs; 1) consider yourself from an asset and strengths perspective, 2) network with a broad range of people, 3) seek mentorship from senior African American faculty, 4) develop other interests and employable skills, 5) practice self-care, 6) attend and present research at conferences that are attended by other Black professionals, 7) learn and know employment discrimination laws. These are tools for Black faculty to thrive in white spaces as they progress through the ranks of tenure and promotion. Unfortunately, this is a tough reality of the physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, and legal concerns that Black faculty face when teaching at
PWIs. The lack of support from the institutional level to the departmental level is very clear when comparing the experiences of Black faculty to their white counterparts at PWIs.

Like Alexander and Moore (2008), Allen and Joseph (2018) found that mentorship, collaboration, time, and strategic planning were factors in Black faculty success. Their findings revealed that mentorship and collaboration were the most prominent of the four. Mentorship continues to be a major factor for the success of Black faculty in the. Therefore, there must be a greater push towards white senior faculty mentoring Black faculty and an even greater push for Black faculty to be recruited and retained in the academy for this very reason. Especially at PWIs, where Black faculty make up less than 10% percent of the total full-time faculty population on campus.

The Institution’s Role in the Experiences of Black Faculty

Knowing the challenges and barriers that Black faculty overcome within the academy, we must assume that some of these issues end with lawsuits claims of race, gender, and implicit bias discrimination. For instance, Ward and Hall (2022) conducted a qualitative study that told the stories of four Black faculty members who filed tenure denial lawsuits. Their findings illuminated intersectional barriers to tenure attainment for Black faculty that include inadequate institutional support, divergence from established institutional tenure and promotion policies, inconsistent application of tenure and promotion guidelines, and problematic academic politics. These findings also highlight a deeper issue within higher education organizations. Specifically, presidents, provosts, and deans should be held more accountable for what happens to Black faculty during the tenure and promotion process. At its core, these individuals serve as gatekeepers and
maintain the current tenure and promotion system. Furthermore, it is a part of the problem that PWIs are having when it comes to having sincere institutional commitments to Black faculty retention.

More importantly, they are important for the holistic development of all students who enter their classroom or whom they interact with outside of the classroom. For example, Madyun et al. (2013) noted that “beyond the research scholarship, community service, and mentoring that faculty of color can provide, their presence on majority campuses can play a timely role in students’ development of intercultural competence” (p. 82). Their argument further explains why Black faculty should not just be wanted on campus but needed on campus to expose students to different worldwide views and challenge all students to develop a more diverse set of relationships and resources beyond what they currently know.

Due to the lack of representation of Black faculty at PWIs, students have little to no interaction with Black faculty in or outside of the classroom. More specifically, when white students are faced with a Black faculty members as their teacher in the classroom, they often have negative attitudes and display inappropriate behavior. For example, Parker and Neville (2019) found that white students raised in segregated communities may fail to recognize the salience of race in their lives, and for them, racism only existed in the distant past. They also noted that the level of a student’s racial identity development influenced their perceptions of Black faculty members. These findings are critical to understanding how these perceptions influence the recruitment, retention, and evaluations for tenure and promotion at PWIs for Black faculty members, along with
understanding how these perceptions become the everyday reality for Black faculty to grapple with on a predominantly white campus as they navigate white spaces.

**Black Male Faculty**

Black male faculty are an important piece to the puzzle when it comes to holistic development inside and outside of the classroom. The interaction with students outside of the classroom has been suggested as a numerous benefit and a push toward teaching diversity, equity, and inclusion (McGowan, 2022). For instance, McGowan (2022) found that 1) Students are not used to seeing Black male professors, 2) Black students participate in campus events based on representation and knowing that other Black faculty and students would be present, and 3) The need for mentorship and advocacy for students. These findings highlight just how important Black male faculty are to all students on campus and how their presence is not only wanted but also needed on campus for the holistic development of students.

**Mentoring Black Male Faculty**

Becoming a tenured faculty member is a major accomplishment for any faculty member on the tenure track. When Black male faculty make up less than 3% percent of tenured faculty members across the United States, it makes the accomplishment even more rewarding. However, there are some perceptions that Black male junior faculty must overcome on the road to earning tenure. Williams and Williams (2006) conducted a qualitative study to explore the perceptions of African American male junior faculty on how to improve support systems and structures that address the promotion and tenure divide facing faculty of color. The authors found 1) a lack of Black male senior faculty mentor; 2) a lack of knowledge of the unwritten and unstated rules of promotion and
tenure; 3) a lack of respect for research and scholarship; and 4) a service quagmire. These findings further amplify that the issue with Black male faculty earning tenure starts at the departmental level and ends at the institutional level. Meaning that administrators (President, Provost, Deans, and Departments Chairs) can put systems in place to ensure that Black male faculty are fully supported during their journey to earning tenure and beyond. Not addressing the larger issue when it comes to supporting Black male faculty on the tenure track only perpetuates the system that they are claiming to diversify.

Mentorship and mentors, in general, play a major role in helping others be successful in their aspirations. Like many other careers, faculty members in higher education also depend on the support and guidance of those who have earned the rank of Associate or Full professor. For Black male faculty, having access to a mentor is critical to the success of earning tenure and promotion. Louis and Freeman (2018) had four emergent themes 1) mentors as sources of social capital; 2) accessibility of mentors; 3) the surprising development of cross-cultural mentoring relationships; and 4) the importance of mentoring Black males. Furthermore, Black male faculty are often the only ones in their department, and they are put in a position to seek mentorship from other Black male faculty across campus in other departments or from Black male faculty at other institutions. The lack of senior Black male faculty mentorship for Black male junior faculty puts them further at a disadvantage on the tenure track.

**Black, Male, Faculty (BMF) and On Campus**

Black male faculty are an important piece to the puzzle when it comes to holistic development inside and outside of the classroom. The interaction with students outside of the classroom has been suggested as a numerous benefit and a push toward teaching
diversity, equity, and inclusion (McGowan, 2022). For instance, McGowan (2022) found that 1) Students are not used to seeing Black male professors, 2) Black students participated in campus events based on representation and knowing that other Black faculty and students would be present, and 3) The need for mentorship and advocacy for students. These findings highlight just how important Black male faculty are to all students on campus and how their presence not only wanted but also needed on campus for the holistic development of students.

Over the past several years, we have seen unarmed Black males gunned down by police officers repeatedly on CNN. Those types of images take a toll on the Black community and even Black male faculty in the academy. Metaphorically, Black male professors are also gunned down in the academy (Johnson & Bryan, 2017). For example, Johnson and Bryan (2017) conducted a study and revealed that Black male faculty are hit with 1) a Bullet of rejection; 2) a Bullet of silencing; and 3) a Bullet of disrespect. I would argue that these bullets are used to maintain racism and oppression within the academy. Themes are the type of bullets that Black male faculty are shot with in the form of racism and oppression within the academy. However, Johnson and Bryan’s (2017) call to action focuses on teacher education programs being invested in deepening their understanding of the racialized experiences of Black males in the academy and Black males in America. Furthermore, institutions must do a better job at listening to the concerns of Black faculty members and turning those concerns into real, sustainable actions.

On a college campus, Black male faculty have an opportunity to make a large impact inside and outside of the classroom. Especially at PWIs, where Black male faculty
make up a small percentage of the faculty population. Furthermore, Black male faculty
can have a major impact on Black male student-athletes at PWIs, where they are the most
highly visible group on campus. Kelly et al. (2015) conducted a study using empirical
research and combined classroom and administrative experience of over 35 years and
found that Black male faculty have a tremendous opportunity to make a lasting impact on
the experiences of Black males. Leonard Moore (2011) suggests that Black male faculty
and staff are critical to the transition of Black male student-athletes at Power 5
universities. Furthermore, he recommends that mentoring should occur over the course of
a semester or year and conduct 10 theme-based discussion sessions to help student-
athletes, particularly those at risk of academic failure, gain a better sense of self and
understand their purpose at their respective institution. This study provides an even
broader reach that Black male faculty have at PWIs, along with aiding institutions in
understanding that Black male faculty are valuable beyond the classroom experience and
that their presence has a lasting impact that is critical for Black male student-athletes at
white institutions. Moreover, Black male faculty service to the college should have a high
ranking in their tenure and promotion packet due to their high demand of diversity task
force issues and their service to all students on campus. Currently, these types of services
do not carry much weight in decisions around tenure and promotion. So, while Black
male faculty give a lot of themselves in these situations, they do not receive a lot of
benefits in their tenure and promotion packet.

**Black Male Faculty in White Spaces**

Black male faculty enter their respective classrooms on a white campus knowing
that they will be challenged by their white students or at least prepare to be challenged
Knowing that their students struggle with the process of reconciling what they have been taught socially at home and in their communities with what they are being asked to grapple with from an intellectual point of view (Jackson & Crawley, 2003). For example, Jackson and Crawley (2003) conducted a study on white students’ confessions about their Black male professors. The results indicated that the white student participants tended initially to be more critical toward their Black male professor and, over time, were more accepting and trusting of him. However, they were not willing to forfeit their conservative views on social reality. Furthermore, this goes to show the challenges that Black male faculty are faced with when entering white spaces with white students. Although these challenges are noted in the tenure and promotion process, it is very valuable for department level (i.e., chairs and deans) to know more about what their Black male faculty have overcome on top of their responsibilities as faculty members. Furthermore, Black male faculty should not have to negotiate their identities or pedagogy to make their white students feel safe or comfortable in their classroom.

**Black Male Tenured Professors**

Black male tenure-track professors are less likely than their white and Asian counterparts to be retained and/or recommended for tenure (Ambrose et al., 2005; Booner, 2003; Johnson & Harvey, 2002; Smith, 2004; Warde, 2009). However, even with all the barriers and challenges placed in front of Black male faculty, some have gone on to be successful at earning tenure. Moreover, it is important to know what played a role in their success and how their experience can guide the future Black male faculty on the tenure track. Warde (2009) conducted a qualitative study on 12 Black male tenured
professors and their experience of successfully earning tenure. The participants revealed five themes that aided their success in advancing in the professoriate, and those five themes are: 1) mentorship; 2) organizational support; 3) culture/background; 4) collegiality; and 5) networking. Like previous studies, mentorship continues to be a factor for Black faculty and, more specifically, Black male faculty being successful in the academy. This study also made a note of the importance of having organizational support (i.e., department chair, dean, provost, etc.). Having support at all levels of the institution is important for Black male faculty to feel welcome, that their research matters, and that they are truly a part of the campus community. Warde (2009) noted that the second purpose of this study was to offer advice that would be helpful for current and future Black male tenure-track professors’ success in the professoriate. One of the eight recommendations that is important to consider is “Develop a portfolio that is strong enough to negate any potential racism on the part of individual P&B committee members” (Warde, 2009, p.12). That goes back to Black male faculty having to work ten times as hard as their white and Asian counterparts to navigate racism while pursuing tenure at PWIs.

**Conceptual and Methodological Framework**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) serves as the conceptual guide for this study. As a field, CRT centers on the significance of race and racism in the U.S. and experiential knowledge, including the importance of counter-storytelling. CRT scholarship began in the mid-1970s and was organized as a field in the late 1980s. CRT was a response to the limited ability of critical legal studies (CLS) to address the effects of race and racism in the U.S. judicial system (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Derrick
Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado led the early development of CRT within the legal systems (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). In the mid-1990s, Ladson-Billings and Tate introduced CRT to educational researchers. Since then, CRT has been used increasingly in the field of educational research to dismantle systemic inequities and account for the persistent role of race and racism in the U.S. (Cook, 1995; Crenshaw, 1995; Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Matsuda, 1995). Furthermore, CRT amplifies the voices of marginalized groups and people of color, enabling them to disrupt majoritarian stories about their lived experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

For this study, I highlighted five CRT principles tenets outlined by several scholars (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997) who have extended CRT in the field of education. In the field of education, Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) outlined three underlying principles of CRT: “1) Race is a major factor in the perpetuation of the inequity in the U.S., 2) Property rights are the foundation of U.S. society, and 3) The intersection between race and property forms a critical perspective to understand social inequity” (p.48). Many theoretical concepts and methodologies expand on these CRT principles. Broadly, CRT scholars agree that racism is endemic (Bell, 1992; Lawrence, 1995). In this dissertation, I address the following five tenets established by CRT theorists:

a) counter-storytelling (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Matsuda, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002),
b) the permanence of racism (Bell, 1993; Lawrence, 1995),
c) Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993),
d) interest convergence and the permanence of racism (Bell, 1980, 1993), and
e) the critiques of liberalism (Crenshaw, 1995; Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Taylor et al., 2009).

For this study, I used counter-storytelling as a methodology as my tenet to empower the voices of tenured Black male professors at R1 institutions. Counter-storytelling is the ideal methodological tool to center and uplift marginalized voices, which is essential to understanding this population. Stanley (2006) framed this idea, noting that:

Individual stories are important. They provide qualitative data about oneself as part of a group or culture and help us understand and counter oppression. More important, they can lead to a better understanding of the experiences of faculty of color at predominantly white colleges and universities. This is the very essence of Critical Race Theory. (p. 725)

Summary

It is important to note that this research project examined the lived experiences of tenured Black male faculty at R1 institutions through a CRT lens and not from a deficit perspective. Rather this project was designed to amplify the voices of underrepresented Black males in the academy, along with using the literature to better understand what Black boys and Black men experience along their education journey. By exploring the experiences of tenured Black male faculty, I hope to illuminate the pathway that they have navigated that others may follow as I contribute to the existing literature to deepen the understanding of Black male faculty at R1 institutions.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The present narrative study explored the lived experiences of tenured Black male professors at predominantly white R1 institutions in the United States. More specifically, this study examined participants’ past experiences during their tenure-track journey. In this chapter, I discuss the research questions, rationale for qualitative research, the rationale for counter-narrative and counter-storytelling, population and sampling procedures, data source, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, ethics in qualitative research, data security, trustworthiness, limitations, delimitations, positionality, and summary.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three major research questions, namely:

1. What are the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?

2. What role has mentorship played in the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?

3. What recommendations would tenured Black male professors offer to aspiring Black male professors who are interested in the professoriate?
**Rationale for Qualitative Research**

For this study, I employed a qualitative approach (Patton, 2002) to collect and analyze data. Qualitative research has five major approaches, and those are 1) narrative research; 2) phenomenological research; 3) grounded theory; 4) ethnography; and 5) case study. These forms of research data may be collected through face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and written document analysis (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research allows the researcher to collect rich, meaningful data. Yilmaz (2013) noted that qualitative research involves the process, context, interpretation, meaning, and understanding through inductive reasoning. Qualitative research also allows participants’ voices to be amplified when many of their stories have been told from a place of deficit and/or from a majoritarian perspective (Harper, 2009). Following interpretivist qualitative traditions, Yilmaz (2013) argued that knowledge is not independent of the knower rather, it is socially constructed; reality is neither static nor fixed. A qualitative approach was essential to investigate this study’s research questions because it allows for an in-depth look at the experience, and in this dissertation, the design was created with the intention of uplifting marginalized voices (Lawrence, 1995). For this study, it was important to provide a space where tenured Black male professors’ voices could be heard and amplified.

**Rationale for Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is commonly used to share the ways people experience the world. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stated that “Narrative inquiry is increasingly used in studies of educational experiences.” Clandinin (2016) noted that narrative inquiry begins and ends with the lived experiences of the people involved. Critical race theorists
and others have shared that narrating our stories to ourselves and to others is a part of the human experience (Clandinin, 2016; Lawrence, 1995; Plummer, 1999). Multiple forms of methods can be used in narrative-based research, including interviews, conversations, participant observation, action research, focus meetings, and analysis of personal texts (Lester, 1999).

In this dissertation, I have used the theorizing of critical race counter-narratives to provide an opportunity to learn from tenured Black male faculty members at predominantly white R1 universities. Critical race theorist Lawrence (1995) noted that counter-storytelling:

…recognizes the subjectivity of perspective and the need to tell stories that have not been told and that are not being told. Our voices and the voices of our parents and grandparents are valuable not just because they tell a different story, but because as outsiders, we are not able to see more clearly that what we see is not all that can be seen. (p. 2239)

Counter-storytelling in this study, then, is an appropriate vehicle for naming the racial challenges that Black men experience as they pursue tenure in a post-racial America. The counter-stories presented in this study radically center the Black male experience in academia to call attention to the ways that institutions can improve.

**Population and Sampling Procedures**

For the purpose of this study, my target population was tenured Black male professors at predominantly White R1 institutions in the United States. Criterion sampling methods were used in this study (Patton, 2002). To identify participants for this study, I recruited participants via social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and
LinkedIn) and through network sampling (Glesne, 2016) by communicating with the Black Faculty Caucus present on predominantly White R1 institution campuses, and by identifying prospective participants via R1 university faculty websites. Potential participants were contacted on social media, by telephone, or via email and invited to participate in the research study. Ten tenured Black male faculty were recruited and interviewed. This study explored their lived experiences. Participants met the following criteria: (1) Must identify as Black (African American) – International or U.S. born; (2) Must identify as male; (3) Must be employed at a predominantly white R1 institution; (4) Must be a tenured (associate or full) professor at a predominantly white R1 institution.

**Data Source**

This research study had one form of data. The primary data source was a 60–90-minute in-depth, semi-structured, virtual individual interview. I used Critical Race Theory’s counter-storytelling as my methodological framework and tenets from CRT to create the interview protocol (e.g., see Appendix A) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Interviews were scheduled based on participants’ availability. These interviews allowed me to capture meanings, common experiences, and themes as well as counterpoints and counterstories from the narratives.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Voluntary written consent was obtained, and arrangements were made to conduct the interviews based on participant availability. All interviews were conducted virtually using the Zoom platform and were audio recorded. Participants were reminded that their participation was entirely voluntary, and their responses were kept confidential and locked in a storage room to which only the researcher had access. Immediately following
the completion of the interviews, participants were thanked for their time and participation. I also remained available to answer any questions from the participants.

Although a breach of confidentiality is always a risk, I asked participants to change their screen names on Zoom to their pseudonyms to protect their anonymity, and audio/video recorded data was immediately downloaded to password-protected computers that only I was able to access. Audio/video recordings were kept for the study, and this project was recorded to the password-protected cloud.

**Data Analysis Procedures and Security**

The audio from the interviews was transcribed. After transcribing, I listened to audio recordings while reading transcriptions to verify accuracy. The transcripts were also provided to the participants for member checking, a tool used in qualitative research to ensure trustworthiness and modify the data to ensure accurate responses from the participants in the research study (Birt et al., 2016). Once the transcripts had been both verified for accuracy and member-checked, I began to code them. Relying on Lawrence’s (1991, 1995) use of counter-storytelling methodology, I looked for counter-narratives in the data and in the context that participants shared as they told their stories. Subsequently, I connected salient counterpoints to the literature, and to help answer the proposed research questions of the study.

**Ethics in Qualitative Research**

Bogden and Bilken (1998) noted that informed consent and the protection of human subjects from harm are the two issues that dominate traditional ethics in research. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, the tenured Black male professors electronically signed consent forms agreeing to participate in the study. The consent
forms were emailed to each participant and provided a description of the study, how the study was conducted, and how confidentiality was maintained. The researcher’s role and responsibility was to maintain anonymity. To ensure that identity was protected, special precautions were employed to protect identifying information. I also assigned participants pseudonyms to protect their identities and keep their data confidential. In addition, the universities were assigned pseudonyms as well.

**Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the goal of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the researcher’s findings are worth considering. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the four criteria of trustworthiness. These criteria ensure the methodological and procedural rigor of qualitative studies. The following five measures were taken to ensure that these criteria are met within this study: (1) clarifying researcher bias, (2) expert review, (3) follow-up interviews, (4) thick, rich descriptions, and (5) member checking. To clarify my bias as a researcher, I developed my positionality statement before the study, and I maintained reflective journaling throughout the research process. I also engaged expert review via CRT methodological experts and experienced qualitative researchers familiar with Black male faculty issues at PWIs with my Chair, Dr. Spencer Platt. In working with these experts, I requested their feedback on my interview protocol questions to ensure alignment with my theoretical framework and extant literature on the study population. As I dived deeper into the iterative research process, I conducted follow-up interviews with participants to explore their narratives further. I also used thick, rich descriptions to explain my data collection, analysis, and interpretation procedures (Given, 2008). Finally,
member checking ensured rigor, credibility, and accurate descriptions or interpretations of data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interview transcripts and emerging themes from data analysis were shared with study participants to confirm the authenticity of the data collected and the accuracy of the data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data were shared via Microsoft Word Documents, and participants were encouraged to use Track Changes to correct or add information.

**Limitations**

One limitation of this study was the number of participants who participated. The number of tenured Black male professors is exceptionally low compared to their Black female and White counterparts. Moreover, the limited amount of research on Black male professors and tenured Black male professors at predominantly White Research 1 institutions also causes a limitation for a research study. Other limitations include conducting this study during a global pandemic and the participants’ time constraints due to many obligations during this time. These limitations include being unable to travel to meet with the participants in person to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews and relying heavily on technology to conduct interviews via Zoom.

**Delimitations**

One delimitation in this study was only recruiting participants that are tenured Black male professors who teach at predominantly white Research 1 institutions. Along with this, the research study only focused on tenured Black male professors and did not include tenured Black female professors. Other delimitations included the research not exploring the experiences of tenured Black male professors at HBCUs or Black male professors who are currently on the tenure track but have not yet earned tenure.
**Positionality**

I am a Black male Ph.D. student at the University of South Carolina, and it is not often that I see Black male professors on campus outside of the two that are in my department. Even though I have not had an unpleasant experience as a doctoral student within my department, I have often felt pressure to perform well every time I stepped inside the classroom because of the lack of students that look like me. Most of the time, I was the only Black male in my class or one of three Black males in a class of 20+ students. The lack of seeing same-race-gender peers added extra pressure on my shoulders to represent myself, my culture, and future Black male Ph.D. students coming after me. Moreover, I had this same pressure when I was earning my master’s degree from the University of Arkansas. My lived experiences as a student at two different R1 institutions encouraged me to explore the experiences of tenured Black male professors.

The feeling of having to perform well derives from my not wanting to be stereotyped and viewed as just someone who slipped through the cracks of the admissions process. I had to show that I earned the right to be in every class that I attended. Many times, I would wonder if Black male professors on campus felt the same way I did. What pressure did they face during their tenure process? How did they overcome those obstacles? These were questions that I often asked myself. I knew that I felt pressure as a student, then I knew they had to have a similar feeling going through academia as tenured professors. Therefore, my research study is focusing the lived experiences of tenured Black male professors at predominantly white R1 institutions.

As a Black male who will soon be a two-time graduate from two different R1 institutions, it is my desire and determination to one day earn tenure at a predominantly
white R1 institution. I believe it is important to understand what that process entails. I know that earning tenure provides job security and demonstrates the dedication that a person has had to their research. Many times, society only sees the finished product, and as a society, we do not know what a person has endured along journey to earn tenure. My goal was to hear the voices of those tenured Black male professors and to shine a light on their experiences to help individuals like myself who are interested in pursuing the tenure route after completing their doctoral studies, share advice to current Black male professors on the tenure track, and to provide recommendations to institutions on how they can improve the tenure track process for Black male professors.

**Summary**

This chapter summarized the qualitative research methods that guided data collection and analysis. This narrative qualitative study approach was implemented. Individuals that were asked to participate in this study were males who self-identified as Black and who were tenured professors at predominantly white R1 institutions. One form of data was collected. Data were analyzed and coded. Throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation, measures were taken to ensure that validity, credibility, and trustworthiness are present within the study.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Introduction

This narrative study documented the lived experiences of tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions across the United States. The 13 participants reflected upon and conveyed the stories of their experiences regarding the pursuit of tenure at their perspective institutions. The stories were gathered through semi-structured, open-ended interviews with each participant. The participants in this study shared stories about the lack of diverse tenure committee members, the political game associated with the tenure process, and/or the lack of limited access to mentors within their department. Many of the participants shared that they were the only Black professor or one of two Black professors within their department and, in many cases, the only person of color within their college. This study served multiple purposes. First, it provided a roadmap for Black males who are on the tenure track and for those Black males who are interested in pursuing the professoriate as a career. Secondly, the results of this study provide context for senior faculty, Department Chairs, Deans, Provosts, and Presidents on the factors that impact the success of Black male faculty earning tenure at a Research 1 institution. Lastly, this study contributed to the body of literature on Black male faculty and the tenure and promotion process. In this chapter, you will find the narrative of each participant’s educational journey and the thematic analysis of emergent themes. The following research questions guided this study:
1. What are the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?

2. What role has mentorship played in the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?

3. What recommendations would tenured Black male professors offer to aspiring Black male professors pursuing the professoriate on the tenure-track?

During the interviews, each of the 13 participants were asked about their educational journey. Each participant spoke about their life before becoming a tenure-track faculty member and what it took for them to get where they are today. Participants were given the ability to decide where they wanted to begin when telling the story of their educational journeys.

It is important to note that the findings of this study are presented in two parts. Themes 1, 2, and 3 are used to make sense of the educational journey narratives that are presented at the beginning of the chapter. The lengths of these narratives may vary as they are reflective of the information that was provided by the participants during the interview. Each participant was given the autonomy to choose which parts of their educational journey they wanted to highlight.

Some participants started their narratives as early as elementary school, while others started telling their stories from their undergraduate experience. Often, we are only familiar with who a person is after they become who they are. However, it is just as pivotal to acknowledge what it took for that person to do. Therefore, participants’ educational journeys are important, and their narratives are told to provide a better understanding of each participant and what they had to overcome during the early stages...
of their educational journeys. These narratives also allow their stories to be a source of inspiration and a beacon of hope for others, specifically for Black males. In this next section, you will learn about the educational journeys of the 13 participants. Pseudonyms are used to maintain participant confidentiality, and the participants were identified using their self-selected pseudonyms. Following their educational journey narratives, the next section will expound upon the overarching themes that emerged from research questions. This chapter closes with a summary of findings that synthesizes the educational journeys and themes.

Table 4.1

Themes from Participants’ Educational Journeys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1: The Black Community was a valuable source of academic motivation.</strong></td>
<td>Participants were able to find motivation to succeed academically regardless of the many barriers and challenges that they had to overcome at home or in the school system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2: A low-income household does not mean low achievement.</strong></td>
<td>The ten participants who grew up in low-income homes had the same level of academic achievement as the other four participants who grew up in middle-class household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3: The academic community plays a role in Black males’ decisions to pursue graduate education.</strong></td>
<td>Community (i.e., advisors, mentors, professors, University President, and peers) was the reason they decided to continue their education after earning their undergraduate degree.</td>
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</table>

As participants discussed their educational journeys, three themes emerged. First, there was a common thread around Black boys’ motivation to succeed academically. The second theme was centered around the idea that low income did not equate to low achievement for the study’s participants. The final theme related to the participants’
educational journeys was that community plays a vital role in Black boys’ academic success. These themes are discussed in detail before the presentation of the participants’ narrative journeys to help make sense of why it was important to include them. These educational journeys set the stage for conversations about tenure experiences because their educational journeys are where the participants initially experienced success and formed their academic sense of self.

**The Black Community was a valuable source of academic motivation.**

Historically, Black boys have been stereotyped as a group that does not care about their academic success. Many Black boys struggle to be seen by their teachers, who are predominantly white women, while simultaneously overcoming this notion of being a threat or labeled as the bad guy. The participants in this research were able to find the motivation to succeed academically regardless of the many barriers and challenges that they had to overcome at home or in the school system. More specifically, Black boys found the motivation to succeed academically through their parents, Black teachers, and other community members, reminding them that educational excellence was part of their fabric as Black men. These participants were made aware at an early age that education was the key to success and words of affirmation, telling them they were intelligent and gifted students, motivated them to succeed academically.

**Parents were major contributors to the development of Black boys’ educational fabric**

In the participants’ educational journeys, parents played a major contributor to the development of Black boys’ educational fabric. Here, *educational fabric* refers to the participants’ academic sense of self. Through all the participants’ stories, they spoke about how their parents valued education and made sure they were being successful in the
classroom. One participant’s mother saw that her son was heading down the wrong path and decided to move him to another school. It was not until she made that decision that he began to turn things around academically. Another participant’s father was a higher education administrator and made sure that his son knew that attending college was not optional. He wanted to make sure that his son knew the power of education and how far a great education could take a Black man in this society. Another participant shared how their mother instilled in them how having an education was going to be beneficial for living in a white man’s world. From that moment on, they made their education a priority, and they understood the educational fabric that had been instilled in them as a protection of covering.

Black teachers and other community members affirmed Black boys’ educational fabric

Like parents’ contributions, Black teachers and other community members affirmed Black boys’ educational fabric. Participants in this study shared in their educational journeys how their Black teachers stood in the gap for them when they noticed their academic ability was being overlooked by their white teachers. For example, one participant shared how they were stereotyped as a troubled student by a white teacher, but it was the Black teacher that noticed he needed to be challenged academically, and he was recommended for the gifted and talented program at his school. Once he entered the program, he was able to tap into his academic potential and became more engaged. Other participants spoke about how community members also contributed to their understanding of their educational fabric as Black boys. For example, one participant shared in their educational journey that he was always affirmed that he was a
genius by people in the community in which he lived. He made note that those community members were Black people who believed in him before he ever became who he is today.

**A low-income household does not mean low achievement.**

All the participants in this research study became academic achievers during their educational journeys. However, there was a difference in the types of household participants were raised in. Ten of the thirteen participants in this research study were raised in low-income households. Those same ten participants were also raised in a single-parent household. However, those ten participants had the same level of academic achievement as the other four participants who grew up in middle-class households. This theme speaks to the understanding that a low-income household does not mean low achievement. When reading the educational journeys of these 13 participants, they all had high achievements when it came to their education. One participant’s mother struggled with drug addiction and bounced around from state to state during their K-12 experience, but he was still able to be successful enough to get into college and later earn a juris doctor and doctoral degree. Participants in this study were still able to reach high achievement regardless of the barriers they had to overcome from growing up in a low-income household.

**The Academic Community plays a role in Black males’ decisions to pursue graduate education.**

For the Black males in this study, community played a significant role in their pursuit of graduate school. That includes their desire to earn a master’s and doctoral degrees. Some participants spoke about how their professors at the undergraduate level
reassured them they should apply for their master’s degree, and they also reassured them that they were capable of being successful academically. One participant spoke specifically about their established connection with the President of their college while serving as the Student Government Association President and how that relationship sparked their interest in obtaining higher learning. In the educational journeys, it was very clear that their community (i.e., advisors, mentors, professors, university presidents, and peers) was the reason they decided to continue their education after earning their undergraduate degree. Advisors and peers also encouraged Black males to earn their doctoral degrees. Participants in this study had graduate advisors at the master’s level who served as mentors and guided participants down the path of earning a doctoral degree. One participant specifically spoke about how one of their peers motivated them to pursue a doctoral degree by engaging them in the work they were doing for their dissertation. Furthermore, the peer of this participant shared with them that they could write a dissertation, too, if they had the proper training. This ended up becoming the determining factor for this participant applying and being accepted into a doctoral degree program. This theme speaks to the importance of community and how the community took part in elevating the educational journeys of Black males in their pursuit of earning graduate degrees.

Overall, the participants in this study were able to achieve at high levels as students in elementary and secondary school. Because of the support of their parents and others in the community, they were able to continue that success in undergraduate and graduate school. Their educational journeys follow, synthesized by the researcher from the participants’ words.
Participants’ Educational Journey

TUPAC

Tupac was born in Memphis, TN but grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina, the home of the four Black male students who sat in at a Woolworth’s counter to ignite the college sit-in movement at North Carolina A&T State University. Education was valued heavily by his mother and father. During the interview, Tupac noted that his mother grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina and his father grew up in Liberia, West Africa. Tupac started his early education at a local university’s pre-school and later got enrolled into kindergarten at a magnet school in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Tupac graduated from Gogetter High School, and was a pretty good student with As and Bs. The only class that he received a C in was science. Tupac was a big basketball player in the state of North Carolina, and he ended up attending CH University for his undergraduate studies. During his freshman year at CH University, he made the junior varsity (JV) basketball team. Being a basketball player was a big part of his identity. However, Tupac realized that getting into the business school at CH University would require him to have a 3.0 GPA or higher and, after failing to achieve that his first year, he decided to stop playing JV basketball to focus on his education.

Once Tupac stopped playing JV basketball, he went through an identity crisis and changed his major five times. Tupac ended up double majoring in Sociology and Recreation Management. With his mother being a college professor at Bee College and his father being a medical doctor, he knew that becoming a medical doctor was not in his calling. He never saw himself becoming an educator either. However, his mentor encouraged him to go back to school to earn his master’s degree to become an athletic
director. It was during his master’s studies at CH University when he did his thesis on Black male student-athletes and wholistic development, that he found his calling. Tupac attended the University G where he earned his Ph.D. in Kinesiology, Sport Management, and Policy. After earning his Ph.D., Tupac become an Assistant Professor at Cove University, and he earned the rank of Associate Professor at there. Currently, Tupac is an endowed chair and holds the rank of Full Professor.

MC HAMMER

MC Hammer is from West Memphis, Arkansas and grew up in a low-income household. MC Hammer’s elementary and middle school were primarily Black due to the neighborhoods being segregated. In his hometown, there was only one high school, so everyone ended up in the same high school. Out of the 200 students in his graduating class, he ranked eighth and had a 3.8 GPA when he graduated high school. He was inspired to become a physician or lawyer because of his upbringing as that was the measure of success in his town. MC Hammer did not have a lot of options to choose from, but he knew that the family business of becoming a plumber was not something he wanted to do.

MC Hammer ended up applying and was accepted into West University. This is a small liberal arts college known for medicine, engineering, among other things. Some of his choices were Morehouse College, Penn State, and University of Maryland-College Park, and Hampton University. MC Hammer decided to attend West University because he had family close to the school and he received a scholarship from the university. That scholarship was later matched by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Gates Millennium Scholarship, which funded most of his education.
MC Hammer entered West University majoring in pre-med, biology. He was less than average there because everybody there was coming from around the country to attend this ranked institution. After realizing he was not performing well, MC Hammer decided to change his major to English with a focus on creative writing. At the time, MC Hammer was still interested in healthcare, but made the adjustment because he did not perform well in the sciences.

After graduating from West University, he attended Eagle University and majored in Public Health in their Department of Health Policy and Management. MC Hammer thought this would allow him to pursue a potential career in healthcare management where he would not necessarily be the physician in the hospital, but he could operate it. However, it was an experience at church seeing some Black men health educators in a non-profit organization creating awareness about prostate cancer and attending a conference on public healthcare, public health entertainment that also sparked his interest in media and technology and the role of those things in the advancement of healthcare decision making and health education.

The church experience around prostate cancer awareness sparked his interest in becoming a healthcare educator. It also created an interest in healthcare behavior. Ultimately, MC Hammer made the decision not to go into healthcare administration because of the competitive nature of healthcare fellowships in healthcare administration at the time. After interviewing for them and not getting accepted, MC Hammer started working at a public health organization called Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and from there he decided that he wanted to go back for his doctorate. After two years off, MC Hammer went back for his doctorate in public health at the Sunshine University.
After graduating from the School of Public Health at the Sunshine University, he started a tenure-track position in the College of Social Work at the Sunshine University. MC Hammer is currently at the Sunshine University and holds the rank of Associate Professor in the College of Social Work.

**QUINCY JONES**

During my interview with Quincy Jones, he started his educational journey narrative by telling me about his experience in elementary school. Quincy Jones noted that he picked up things easily and recalled being in fifth grade moving to another city where the placement test was a requirement. As a fifth grader, he was testing at the ninth-grade level and, as a result, was identified as gifted student. However, after being tested eight or nine times and passing all the tests, nothing happened. Quincy Jones recalled that he had never been placed in a gift classroom despite having the gifted designation.

Once Quincy Jones got to middle school, he was placed in remedial class in the sixth grade. Quincy Jones remembered asking himself, “Why am I in here?” He noted that the school he attended was a large middle school that just did not have all the resources it needed to thrive. Quincy Jones grew up in Norwalk, Connecticut and noted that his city school was in a community that was vastly impoverished. One thing that he noted about Norwalk, Connecticut that was interesting was that the people were either very rich or very poor. Quincy Jones stated that in middle school, he was in a class that had 34 students, but there were only enough chairs for 32 students. His first day of his science lab class, he showed up late and had to sit on top of the countertop. That was when he started to get to his class earlier so he would have a place to sit. Quincy Jones
also noted that he started to struggle in school and his grades fell to Cs and Ds. Quincy Jones recalled his mother saying, “We got to figure out something.”

Quincy Jones started school at Ark Academy, where his great-aunt was the director of admissions. Quincy Jones recalled not wanting to attend this prep school because they would retain students from public schools one grade if they did not pass the Independent School Exam. However, Quincy Jones passed the exam and started his new journey at this new school. Quincy Jones went from a majority minority school comprised of kids in his community to an all-white school. He recalled that experience being a drastic culture shock but being at the school taught him how to compete because students at the school thought he was just there to play sports. Although Quincy Jones was top athlete from his city, he did not attend the school just to play sports. As Quincy Jones emphasized, he was smart.

Quincy Jones stated that being in that type of environment changed his whole trajectory. He started doing well academically because he had to compete with the white kids in class. At this school he never got into any serious trouble, and he became the star of the basketball team. During his freshman and sophomore years, Quincy Jones’ recruitment started to pick up. He noted that one time he was taking the PSAT, and the guidance counselor tapped him on the shoulder during the test to let him know the coach from Columbia University was calling and asking for his transcripts and that he needed Quincy Jones’ permission to release it to the coach. Quincy Jones remembered saying, “Cool.” At that point, he started the college visits.

Quincy Jones quickly realized that Division 1 athletics was like a full-time job even though he was not getting paid. Then, while a lady from the admissions office was
visiting his high school, he was introduced to Lemon College now known as Lemon University. She told Quincy Jones, “Hey you should look at our campus. It’s a great small school similar to what you’re already in.” Quincy Jones went on a visit and realized he did not want to attend a big school. Quincy Jones noted that being at Lemon College changed everything. He got connected and started doing well.

Quincy Jones also noted that, during his recruitment journey, it was clear that many coaches did not want him to major in music due to the time commitment of both the music department and the athletic program. He was only being allowed to major in business marketing or health sciences. Quincy Jones said, this was a part of the coaches having control of his schedule. He wanted to become a music producer and he was gifted in music, too. However, Lemon College was the only school that allowed Quincy Jones to play basketball and major in music. He did well academically, made the dean’s list and received support from his professors who wanted to support him in music.

After Quincy Jones graduated from Lemon College, he moved back to Connecticut and became a music teacher in Bridgeport. During his first year teaching, one of his students was killed in the community. Quincy Jones stated, “These are seventh and eighth graders, I got them coming in crying, Yo, Bobby dead, Bobby’s dead. What we supposed to do?” It was during that moment he realized he did not have the skills to help his students get through such a tragic moment. That is when he decided to go back to school to earn his degree in human services with a focus in clinical counseling with the goal of learning how to support students’ social-emotional needs.

Later, Quincy Jones became interested in becoming a principal and he remembered how people would say principals are the ones who change the school. At
that point, Quincy Jones thought that he needed a doctorate to be a principal. He started his doctoral program at Mountain University with the idea that he was going to become a principal. Quincy Jones noted that, becoming a faculty member was never a part of his journey at all. He just wanted to teach and work with kids, that’s what he did. He stated that, “But when I got to Mountain, which was very different than Lemon College and then Post University where I got my master’s, it was an HBCU was a whole different vibe.” While at Mountain University, Quincy Jones had his first Black male professor. Quincy Jones stated, “Being in that program, being in the education environment talking about Black folks, I loved it. I was like, this is great. I wanted to learn.”

During my interview with Quincy Jones, he noted that school came easy during his undergraduate and master’s studies. However, that changed while at Mountain University. Quincy Jones had a professor by name of Dr. Moses who put an X on his entire paper and told him that he needed to improve his writing. From that day forward, Quincy Jones started reading. He would read one journal article every day during the second year of his doctoral program and reported that reading really changed the game for his doctoral journey. He also noted that he figured out how to become a better doctoral student and started to keep a vocabulary list. Dr. Moses became Quincy Jones’ mentor and told him that he could do research for living. It was Dr. Moses who encouraged Quincy Jones’ potential to become a professor. Dr. Moses informed Quincy Jones that he would have to write for publication and, from there, he started joining professor groups to learn the process.

Quincy Jones joined the Race Mentoring group and had mentors who showed him the ropes when it came to publishing. When Quincy Jones graduated from Mountain
University he had three published articles, two edited books under contract, and nine peer-reviewed journal articles. At that point, he knew he was going to be a professor. He just had to find a place to land to start his career in the professoriate.

Quincy Jones noted that, when applying for professor positions, he was questioned about being able to handle the work because of he earned his doctorate from an HBCU. That kind of feedback ended up becoming his fuel and fire to get a tenure-track position at a Research 1 institution. Quincy Jones ended up applying for a tenure-track position at Lancet University and he stayed there for four years. In those four years, Quincy Jones had close to 50 publications. He also noted that, after two to three years he was being offered endowed professorships at associate professor based on productivity. With Lancet being a teaching institution, Quincy Jones had his eyes set on tenure-track position at Research 1 institution. That is when Quincy Jones landed a position at Torch College. He was recruited to Torch College by a colleague. Quincy Jones noted that she said, “You would be great for our students.” He successfully made it through the interview process and started his position during the midst of the COVID pandemic. Currently, Quincy Jones is a tenured Associate Professor at Torch College.

ANDRE 3000

Andre 3000 spoke about attending diverse schools in Atlanta, Georgia where he grew up. After Andre 3000 graduated from high school, he attended Falls University, an HBCU located in Georgia. He stated that while attending Falls University, it was the first time that he felt validated as a Black man in an educational environment.

Andre 3000 graduated from Falls University and started his master’s degree at the Sunshine University. While at the Sunshine University, Andre 3000 earned two degrees.
He received his master’s degree and doctorate in health promotion, education, and behavior in the School of Public Health. After finishing his degree at the Sunshine University, Andre 3000 had plans to work for a government agency.

During my interview with Andre 3000, he noted that he never intended to become a college professor. As he was going through his graduate studies, he really did not want to go into the academy because the professors did not seem well-adjusted. However, that changed when he started his post-doctoral position and realized the culture was different, and the people there seemed like they had a good work-life balance. Andre 3000 said, “They seemed like they were hard working, but also pretty well-adjusted.” After speaking with several different people, he changed his mind about working for a government agency and decided that the professoriate was viable career path. In his interview he stated, “So, I went through some job interviews at schools, and it worked out. I don’t know, just kind of ended up in the academy.” Currently, Andre 3000 is a tenured Associate Professor at the Vault University.

DRAKE

During my interview with Drake, I learned that he attended Saint College, which is a preparatory high school for boys with a combination of day students who live in town and a boarding school for students that attend from across the country and international countries. Drake mentioned that a lot of his family members attended and graduated from there, and that his father taught there for over 20 years. From there, Drake went to Jones University. Drake earned a full ride scholarship playing tennis for Jones University and he graduated with his bachelor’s degree in psychology. Drake went to pursue a master’s degree in educational psychology from Opal University. While attending Opal
University, Drake got involved doing volunteer work in the community and in the schools. He really enjoyed the K–12 school setting and wanted to find out how he could use his psychology background in the schools. So, he became a school counselor and that started his journey to teaching in the K-12 schools. Drake worked as a counselor for a few years and earned his specialist degree in educational leadership with a focus on P–12, and then he earned his doctorate. Both his specialist and doctorate were earned at the Moss University. After working as counselor, Drake transitioned into administration work and spent 14 years in administration before transitioning into academia and becoming a professor. Prior to becoming a professor, Drake had spent some time as adjunct professor. Drake transitioned into a role at the Moss University where he taught for about nine years and earned tenure and promotion before moving over to Deed University. Drake noted that, “I enjoyed working in the K–12 environment, but I was at the time ready for some change, ready for something new and fresh and wanted to figure out how I could remain connected to the K–12 environment while also doing something a little bit different. “Currently, Drake is a tenured Associate Professor at Deed University.

Lil’ Flip

Lil’ Flip earned his undergraduate degree at Victory College. Before starting his master’s degree, Lil’ Flip worked at a biomedical research center as a Research Assistant. In my interview, Lil’ Flip shared that he went to Lamp University for a master’s in psychology and he earned his doctorate in life span development.

After graduating from Lamp University, Lil’ Flip took his first teaching job at Hip University where he was an assistant professor. Lil’ Flip realized while there, that he wanted to have a more intensive research career and he decided to leave Hip University.
to become a postdoc. Lil’ Flip started his postdoc at Port University in the genetics field. When Lil’ Flip left Hip University, he took a 25% pay cut. He stated that, “that was a great investment because while there, I got recruited to [Zone State].”

Lil’ Flip went from an Assistant Professor to Full professor while at Zone State. Lil’ Flip was then recruited to Ocean University as Full Professor and after 10 years of being there, he was recruited into the Provost Office as the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. From Ocean University, Lip Flip went to Snow University to become the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. In 2020, Lil’ Flip became the President of the Igloo University and currently he still serves as the President.

JAHEIM

Jaheim grew up in a single parent household were his mother raised four kids. Even though his mother was drug addicted, and they were homeless for most of his childhood, she produced an engineer, a nurse, a plumber, and a professor. Jaheim was born in New Orleans, and his mother moved them to Atlanta for a better opportunity when he was two years old. Jaheim recalled his schools being very diverse with people from all walks of life, both domestic and international. Jaheim also noted that, as kid, he struggled with reading until he reached second grade. He recalled, “One I figured reading out, things got really, really good for me.” However, Jaheim stayed in Atlanta until third grade and then moved back to New Orleans with his family.

In fourth grade, Jaheim had a teacher named Mrs. Mitten and she always thought he was smart, but she thought he was bad. He recalled that Ms. Mitten used to pinch his arm when she thought Jaheim was being a handful. Jaheim also had a teacher named Ms. Mack. People who grew up with him would joke that he killed Ms. Mack because he used
to cuss the woman out daily. Jaheim noted that it was interesting because he did all this cussing out, but he always was at the top of the class. Ms. Mack recommended Jaheim for the gifted and talented program. Jaheim remembered realizing how rare it was for teacher to recommend a student with a behavior problem for the gifted and talent program. He got into the gifted and talented program and ended up working with Ms. Betty. At this time in Jaheim’s life, his mother went into rehab in Baton Rouge, and he ended up living with his grandparents. By the time Jaheim got to sixth grade, he had moved to Baton Rouge where he attended a magnet middle school. Jaheim noted that the school was interesting at the time because it was the number one middle school in country during his time there.

The magnet middle school became the first school that Jaheim attended that was almost exclusively white. There were 95 Black students in an entire school of 1500 students. While there, they gave Jaheim a diagnostic test and suddenly, in sixth grade he began taking high school level courses along with his sixth-grade level courses. Jaheim attended the magnet middle school for sixth, seventh, and some of eighth grade. When busing became an issue, Jaheim ended up at a public school for eighth grade. This school was about a two-hour bus ride for Jaheim every morning and every evening, which was problematic because he played sports. So, it was like when he got out of class, every day, he basically got home at night. Ultimately, his enrollment at the school did not work out because the school district’s leaders realized that they were busing people 40 to 50 miles across the district. At that point, Jaheim was forced to move schools again and he ended up at Westside Academy. Jaheim stated that, “[Westside] is where, not to be vain, the
first time I ever become popular at school. I've always kind of lived in my siblings' shadows, but I was developing my own personality in many ways.”

Somewhere at the beginning of Jaheim’s eighth grade year, his mom relapsed on drugs and disappeared. His sister dropped out of school and took care of them for a while, but then she was unable to do it anymore. She called their grandfather, who showed up one day with his girlfriend, saying, "You’re going back to New Orleans." So, Jaheim ended up at yet another magnet school. The school served grades 7 through grade 12 and it ended up being the most pivotal time in his life because he was becoming popular, and the magnet school was the first school broadly in his experience where the most popular people were also the smartest. More significantly, the school was almost exclusively Black. The student population was 86% Black.

Jaheim graduated from the magnet school when he was in the 11th grade. At that time Jaheim, was splitting time between the magnet school and the local community college. He ended up taking college courses in the eighth grade at the community college and, as a result, he went into college with college credits. Upon his graduation from the magnet school, he went to the Water University where he studied chemical engineering, and he ended up lasting two years at the Water University before leaving and heading back to Louisiana to attend Kite University. At Kite, Jaheim majored in political science. After graduating, Jaheim went to Iowa for law school and ended up spending a year as part of a consortium agreement with Essentials University in Baton Rouge.

After graduating from Iowa law school, Jaheim was unsure about his future and became a substitute teacher. During this time, his sister became a victim of domestic violence and Jaheim became a surrogate parent to his sister overnight. He continued to
teach and, during his last few years in the classroom, he decided that he wanted to pursue a master’s in education. Ultimately, Jaheim was asked to become an administrator. Instead, he ended up employed at a justice non-profit because, at the time, they were launching their school-to-prison pipeline project in New Orleans, and they were looking for an education advocate. He was a perfect fit for the role because they wanted someone with a legal background who also understood education. He did that for a year, basically petitioning to sue schools for abusive behavior to students with disabilities. Jaheim realized in the middle of that, that he could not continue in that line of work and that it was hard to sue individual people who were doing the same thing. Jaheim noted, "I need to be a professor so I can teach these people not to actually do what they're doing. How do I become that?"

While on a trip to New York with his mother for her birthday, Jaheim ended up speaking with Dr. Green. During the conversation with Dr. Green, Jaheim was trying to get advice on which school he should attend between Zone State or Reach University. However, Dr. Green never told Jaheim which school to attend because he was recruiting Jaheim to Zone State. Jaheim ended going to Zone State and fell in love with it, although he felt tricked by the way they got him there.

Jaheim spent three and a half years at Zone State, and he ended up starting his career as a visiting faculty member at the Desert State University. Jaheim worked there for a year until Louisiana had $2.5 billion budget cuts in education and health care. Jaheim ended up losing his job as visiting faculty member during the budget cuts. However, Jaheim landed a tenure-track faculty position at Spinning University. Jaheim spent seven years at Spinning, and he was promoted a year early to associate professor
and took over the program coordinator duties. Currently, Jaheim is an associate professor and department chair at Igloo University.

KANYE WEST

Kanye West grew up in Thomasville, Georgia, which is right on the Georgia and Florida border in a racially segregated small town. At the time Kanye West was growing up, the town’s population was essentially split 50/50, Black, and white, and the public schools he attended also mirrored those demographics. Kanye West noted that, “One of things that occurred in those public schools, though, is that white folks were, you know, disproportionally represented in AP, honors, and college preparatory courses.” He also stated that Black kids were disproportionally represented in the vocational courses.

Kanye West mentioned that most of the teachers in his schools were white women. Growing up in a segregated neighborhood, he recalled being called a genius from the people on his street and elders in his neighborhood. He noted that his giftedness was very much affirmed in his neighborhood, but in his schools it was not. However, that changed when Kanye West got to eighth grade and had his first Black male teacher, Mr. Paul. During that time, Mr. Paul encouraged Kanye West to run for Student Council President. At that time, he not been any sort of student leader or in clubs of that kind. Kanye West said, “To a lot of my peers it kind of felt like a joke. Especially like I ran against this white girl and her daddy was the president of the bank in town.” However, Kanye West won the election and held his first student leadership position in eighth grade. That put him on a pathway through high school to continue being a student leader.

Outside of Kanye West holding his student leadership position, he noted that he was an average student when it came to his academic performance in the classroom.
During his last year of high school, the state of Georgia created the Georgia Hope Scholars Program that was funded by the lottery. To receive this scholarship, students had to earn a 3.0 GPA or higher to receive the Hope Scholarship. When Kanye West graduated from high school, he had a 3.01 GPA, and he was awarded the Georgia Hope scholarship.

Kanye West attended Acorn University, a public historically Black University. He noted that, his professors affirmed and embraced him, but they also challenged him, too. They challenged him to be a deeper thinker and more of an intellectual. Kanye West became the freshman class Vice President, sophomore class President, and Vice President of the student government. He later became the President of the Student Government. During that time, Acorn University had some turnover in the presidency, and they hired a new president that Kanye West thought was amazing. He said, “Student first was her thing. She and I were close when I was the student body president, and she very much nurtured my interest in a career in higher education.”

After graduating from Acorn University, Kanye West went off to graduate school at Flower University. While there, Kanye West thought that he was going to become a president of an HBCU. However, while at Flower University, Kanye West got the opportunity to create courses for and teach undergraduates. From that experience, Kanye West was still focused on becoming an administrator but was also interested in becoming an adjunct professor because he enjoyed teaching.

It was not until Kanye West got into his dissertation work that he came to understand that research was something very different than what he thought it was. After having the great teaching experiences at the undergraduate level, Kanye West became
open to becoming a faculty member. Once he finished his doctorate, he applied for 44 jobs, and he ultimately got five offers. Only one of the five offers came with a faculty appointment. Kanye West ended up at the South University in an administration role with a clinical non-tenure track faculty appointment.

At the end of Kanye West’s first year at the South University, he was awarded the professor of the year award for outstanding teaching. Weeks after receiving that award, Kanye West also was awarded the NASA dissertation of the year award for his dissertation. Kanye West said, “So I put those two things together, and it became really clear to me. Like you need to get out of this ridiculously stupid administrative job and get on that tenure-track.” After working another year at the South University, Kanye West started his search for a tenure-track position. Kanye West ended up landing a job at Zone State’s higher education program, which was ranked number one in the country. After leaving Zone State, he took a tenure-track position at the Hilltop University and that was where he became tenured and earned the rank of associate professor. Currently, Kanye West holds the rank of full professor at the South University.

**KENDRICK LAMAR**

Kendrick Lamar was a first-generation college student when he attended Midwest University (MU) for his undergraduate studies. Before attending MU, Kendrick Lamar wanted to be a marine and follow in the footsteps of other family members who were marines. It was when Kendrick Lamar had a conversation with his Uncle Freddy that changed his mind.

When Kendrick Lamar started at MU, he majored in marine biology. He earned a D in biology during his first year and the chair of the department sat him down and
encouraged him to pursue his degree. In his reflection, Kendrick Lamar noted believed the chair of department’s actions were racist. However, Kendrick Lamar graduated from MU as a scholar-athlete with a 2.9 GPA with his undergraduate degree in Public Relations.

In 2007, Kendrick Lamar decided he wanted to get a Ph.D. He applied to attend school at the Water University for their EDH program, and they had a moratorium in place. Kendrick Lamar stated, “[Water University] had a pipeline issue. Most of their students had finished exams, but they had not defended their dissertation.” The university ended up telling Kendrick Lamar that he would be admitted into the program, but he could not start until the moratorium was finished. Although he was admitted into the Ph.D. program in 2007, Kendrick Lamar did not start his Ph.D. until 2008. During that time, the Water University assigned Kendrick Lamar his dissertation chair before he even knew what he wanted to write about for his dissertation.

During Kendrick Lamar’s time at Water University, he started to ask him, “How do I get socialized to be a faculty member?” From Kendrick Lamar’s perspective, Water University was not focused on generating faculty members. It was during his time at the National College Association Networking conference that he met Alice, who worked at Uptown University. Alice told Kendrick Lamar about this three-day program that was paid for by the university if he wanted to become a doctoral student at the Uptown University. Kendrick Lamar flew out to the university and got connected with Dr. Smith who was over the Education Coaching Society at the university. From there, he was introduced to the faculty in the Educational Leadership and Policy program. Kendrick Lamar ended up attending the Uptown University for his Ph.D. where he was a research
assistant for two years, a teaching assistant for two years, and, during his final year, he was a graduate assistant.

Prior to Kendrick Lamar earning his Ph.D., he had a friend by the name Harlem, who defended his dissertation in 2006. He would ask Kendrick Lamar to attend the library with him. During their time in library Harlem introduced Kendrick Lamar to the five chapters that made up a dissertation. At time Kendrick Lamar thought that he was not smart enough to attempt earning a Ph.D., but Harlem reassured him that he could earn a Ph.D., he just needed to be trained. Harlem invited Kendrick Lamar to his dissertation defense, and once Kendrick Lamar saw Harlem defend his dissertation, they stayed in contact with each other. Harlem told Kendrick Lamar, “You can do it. Black men graduate every May with a Ph.D. from somewhere.” That is when Kendrick Lamar decided he wanted to earn his Ph.D. to become a faculty member. Currently, Kendrick Lamar is a tenured Associate Professor at Lamp University.

BIG BOI

Big Boi grew up in a low-income apartment in Florida. His mother always kept him, and siblings, rooted in Blackness. He grew up going to an all-Black daycare. During his K–12 educational journey, Big Boi made decent grades. At one point, he was going to skip a grade and go from fifth grade to seventh grade, but his mother thought that he was too immature to make that move. In high school, Big Boi was not engaged in his work academically. He wanted to be more social and hangout. It was not until his 11\textsuperscript{th} grade year that he got serious about his schoolwork and started making good grades.

When it came to applying for college in the state of Florida, Big Boi did not meet course requirements to enroll in school in the state of Florida. Because of that, Big Boi
had to either go to a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) or attend a community college. Big Boi started his college career attending a community college in Florida and because he bombed his sophomore of high school so bad, he did not have the grades to get into an HBCU either. Big Boi stated that he treated community college like it was the 13th grade, so he was not serious and had to take preparatory courses that did not count towards a major and he failed a couple of classes. At this point, his mother had told him, “I’m not paying for you to go to school no more. If you want to go, you must pay for it yourself.”

During his second semester at the community college, Big Boi got a full-time job working in a cubicle at a call center for a pharmaceutical company. Big Boi hated his job and spoke about how people would complain about their lives all the time. His goal was to get an office even if it meant he had to earn a college degree. Because, in his eyes, all the managers had offices. Then one day, Big Boi realized that he wanted to work with kids so they would not have to go through the challenges that he went through in school. He remembered how his high school counselor had an afterschool program and how the kids were drawn to the school counselor. Big Boi decided that he wanted to help kids get themselves together early and help them have a plan before they leave high school. At the age of 19, Big Boi decided he wanted to be a school counselor.

While in undergrad, Big Boi met some great people from Brothers of the Academy. One of those individuals was Dr. Jones. Big Boi told Dr. Jones that he wanted to do academics and become a researcher. Hearing that, Dr. Jones told Big Boi he could work for him. He started working with Dr. Jones and the Brothers in the Academy as an undergraduate student and that is when he was told he needed to get his Ph.D. At that
time, Big Boi was only focused on earning his master’s degree after finishing his undergraduate studies. However, the Brothers in the Academy told him, “No, you need to go get your Ph.D.” That is how he was pushed into earning his Ph.D. The other Black male professors who were full professors and deans that pushed Big Boi to explore the world of higher learning.

Big Boi was thankful that, during his graduate studies, he had a Black advisor for his master’s program, a Black chairperson, and a Black professor in his Ph.D. program who supported him and challenged him as well. At first, Big Boi thought he was going to work in a community college and never had a tenure-track position on his mind. It was not until he went and did a research presentation as a postdoc that he realized that being a tenure-track professor could be a future career path. Big Boi felt like his position led him to open doors for other students and for other colleagues as well. Currently, Big Boi is an Associate Professor at Wings University. In closing, Big Boi had this to say about being in his position as an Associate Professor, “I also think being in a tenure-track position, I could help more students, particularly Black students get through the pipeline.”

**MOS DEF**

Mos Def was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee and attended a K–8 all-Black Catholic school in Nashville. The school that Mos Def attended was in North Nashville, where the Black working class made up the community. Mos Def recalled engaging with the other Catholic schools only during sporting events and those schools were made up of wealthy white students. That is when he realized that he was on the Black part of town. He noted that his all-Black Catholic school did not have the same resources and that shaped certain kinds of understanding for Mos Def. After Mos Def left
the K–8 Catholic school, he went on to a Catholic high school that was a primarily white high school. Mos Def played sports but hated it because he was the only Black kid. Ultimately, he ended up transferring to the public high school.

At Mos Def’s public high school, Black students made up 20% percent of the student population. However, he noted that 20% percent of students took up a lot of space and, even while attending a majority white high school, he never felt out of place. Mos Def spoke about being surrounded by students from middle- and working-class families and recalled the diversity of students who attended his high school. Mos Def stated that he was a mediocre student in high school that graduated with 2.6 GPA and that he was great athlete. Mos Def’s father was a Dean and Assistant to the President at Fortune University when he was going through school. His father told him that he would purchase him a car if he attended Fortune University. However, if he attended any other college, he would not purchase him car. Mos Def was scheduled to take the ACT at Junior State and the night before the exam Mos Def was out hanging out and did not do well on the ACT to get into Change University and just barely made it into Junior State with his test scores. Mos Def attended Fortune University for his undergraduate studies.

Mos Def said that going to Fortune University was life changing, but prior to attending Fortune University, Mos Def had a principal by the name of Mr. Right, who had to school Mos Def early on. Mr. Right was the only Black principal at Mos Def’s high school, and, for a long time, Mos Def thought Mr. Right was a jerk. However, Mr. Right told Mos Def that he wanted to review Mos Def’s application before it was turned in to Fortune University. Mos Def agreed to letting Mr. Right review his application and, one day, Mr. Right pulled Mos Def out of class to let him know to let him know that
application he put together was not acceptable and that he was not going to let him embarrass himself or his father by turning in his application in that shape. Mr. Right told Mos Def, “That is [a prominent leader’s] school. I mean, come on man. This is Harlem Renaissance. It started there. You are going to get this right.” Although Mos Def thought Mr. Right was jerk, he realized that Mr. Right cared about him and wanted the best for him. Mr. Right was also a graduate of Fortune University and Mos Def has been forever thankful for Mr. Right and what he did for him as a student and, most importantly, a Black man.

While at Fortune University Mos Def’s father told him, “It doesn’t matter what you major in, if you’re not sure, major in what you’re passionate about because you’re probably going to end up going to grad school.” Mos Def ended up majoring in history at Fortune University. While at Fortune University Mos Def was introduced to a graduate program in higher education at Inspiration University. The Vice President of Student Affairs at Fortune University told Mos Def about this program because he was working on his PhD at Inspiration University and told Mos Def that the program was paying $800 dollars a month to enrolled students. After graduating from Fortune University, Mos Def went to Inspiration University to earn his master’s degree in higher education.

Although Mos Def’s mother was a faculty member and his father was a Dean at Fortune University, Mos Def did not know the process for filling out his financial aid application. While visiting Inspiration University he was able to get assistance with filling out his paperwork and staff walked him through the program. Mos Def recalled Inspiration University being excited about him applying because he was a well-rounded student. He had a 3.3 GPA, but he was also very involved in school as a student-athlete.
Mos Def graduated from Inspiration University with his master’s degree in higher education. After graduating from Inspiration University, Mos Def attended Axis University. Unlike Inspiration University, Mos Def enjoyed his experience at Axis University where he received his Ph.D. in Educational Research. Mos Def concluded his educational journey by saying,

As a black man, you have got to be comfortable in your own skin. You've got to be comfortable being the only black person in a room full of white people. And you got to know how to move that understanding because they desperately are attracted to certain kind of qualities about blackness.

CANIBUS

Canibus was born and raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana. At an early age, his mother encouraged Canibus to get his education. At the age of 4, Canibus started kindergarten and he remember his mother going to the school and persuading the teacher that he was ready for school. The first day of class, Canibus recalled his mother giving him a lecture about getting his education and learning what he needed from white people and then using it against them. Canibus stated that his mother was very adamant about him earning excellent grades and the seriousness of his education. Canibus noted that his mother made sure he could go far as he wanted to in education. After his year in kindergarten, he had a Black woman named Ms. Autumn who was his teacher and she pushed Canibus educationally. When he missed a math problem, Ms. Autumn made him go back and do it at home and return it the next day. Canibus said, “So it kind of instilled a discipline in me about making sure that I get everything correct.” At a very early
Canibus mother and Ms. Autumn wanted him to know the importance of education and how far it could take him in life.

Following that, as Canibus got into first and second grades, a lot of the problems that he could not describe, that he now knows happens to boys in elementary school, started happening to him. He stated that, “People started trying to label me a troublemaker, start saying that I was not serious, etc.” However, he noted that they never could negate the fact that he had high grades. When Canibus went from a Black teacher like Ms. Autumn to having white teachers, the problems became more prevalent. That is when his mother decided to take him out of that school and move him into a public magnet school. At the magnet school, Canibus had nothing, but white teachers and the problems continued. During my interview with Canibus he stated, “Same problems we see in the literature people saying that I was a problem, I had a chip on my shoulder, I had an attitude, but nonetheless I had crystal grades.”

From there, instead of shutting down, Canibus used that as fuel to understand that white people were going to constantly attack him because he was a Black boy. Canibus stated that his teachers were constantly trying to show him that he was violent. During our interview, Canibus told a story where he had a teacher in sixth grade that told him he was obsessed with violence because he asked his uncle to bring him back hollowed out grenade from the Gulf War. Canibus made it clear that it was those types of remarks from teachers that would constantly happen to him. Those same remarks changed the way he started looking at his place in the universe. When Canibus got to high school, he became a member of the debate team and that became his new passion. He started doing debates in high school and earned himself a full-ride scholarship to join the college debate team.
When he was on the high school debate team, he wrote this essay about how he was going to be a college professor. At that time, he had a white English teacher, Ms. Benton who told him, “Well it’s really hard to be a college professor.” Canibus stated back to his teacher, “Well lots of things in life are hard that doesn’t mean that it can’t be done.” At the age of 15, Canibus knew that he wanted to become a college professor.

Canibus attended Mincer University for his for undergraduate studies where he was again the only Black male and Black person on his debate team. Canibus stated he faced people claiming that he was incompetent, and he had one person tell him he was ignorant. He continued to go on and because he wanted to get his Ph.D. and he knew he had the grades to do so. Canibus blazed through his university classes but ended up transferring from Mincer to Southwestern College and joined their debate team. During his first and second year at Southwestern had all As, earned all department honors, university honors, and had three majors and a minor while at Southwestern. After finishing his degree at Southwestern, he attended Land College to earn his master’s degree. Canibus said, “That’s where I ran into real blockade of systemic racism.” He stated that his department at Land University was racist and that they never had Black people in their department in philosophy getting Ph.Ds. At one point, the department at Land University tried to dismiss him from the program for saying how racist the department was. Canibus ended up moving back to Southwestern College to finish his Ph.D., and he completed his degree in one year. After completing his Ph.D. at Southwestern, Canibus was hired to do his postdoctoral studies at Zone State, and he was later hired as tenure-track professor at Talent College. Although Canibus earned the rank of full professor while at Talent College, he did go through receiving death threats for
saying, “Black people had a right to defend themselves.” Currently, Canibus holds an endowed chair position at the Global University.

**PUSHA T**

Pusha T was born and raised in Wilmington, North Carolina where his family has been for the past 6 generations. Pusha T said, Wilmington, North Carolina was one of those places in the south where Black people live on one side of town, lower income or poor white folks live on one side of town, and then the rich white folks live on the other side of town. However, Pusha T went to school close to his neighborhood as it was about three blocks from his house. He remembers once school was over during his time in fourth and fifth grade, stopping by the local corner store before heading home. His school at the time was made up of 200 students from K–fifth grade. Pusha T recalls Mr. Gold staying after school to put up the basketball goals so he and other students could play. Although Mr. Gold was not a teacher, he lived in the neighborhood and walk the students back from school.

Pusha T always earned good grades and said that school came easy for him. Pusha T stated that him and his identical twin brother would get targeted to some degree for joking and talking during class. Pusha T recalled getting in trouble in fifth grade for finishing his class work so fast that the teachers had to provide him with more work to do. When Pusha T went to middle school, he began to ride the bus. The middle school that he attended was predominantly white and was made up of middle-class white families. When Pusha T got to middle school, he started taking advanced classes. During his time in high school, he was taking AP courses.
Pusha T and his twin brother wanted to attend the same college and they both applied to places where they played basketball during the summer. In North Carolina, they would have these summer games and they attended summer basketball camps at local universities. Pusha T and his brother both applied to Volume University and were accepted into school for their undergraduate studies. During the time when they were applying, Pusha T said he did not consider himself a first-generation college student. He also went on to say that his mother was pregnant with him and his brother when she was in her second year of college at Foggy University, and she came back home to live with her mother, and she ended up finishing at a satellite school at Beach University. Pusha T said he is always celebrating that for his mother because she felt like she never had enough information to help them through their college process because of her experience.

At this point, Pusha T was ready to pursue his Ph.D. but he was unsure about the route he was going to take in order to earn this degree. He applied to a lot of different schools, and he was mostly rejected because he did not have a master’s degree or five years of work experience. Later, Pusha T applied to attend the Vocal University and was accepted into their Higher Education and Africana Studies Ph.D. program. While at the Vocal University, he worked under his advisor Dr. Sean Harper. Pusha T stated that his advisor played a big role in him becoming a professor. During the time he was preparing for graduation he was applying for jobs to non-academic policy and research jobs. He stated, “I’m glad I landed here, but it was really because of Sean and the major impact he had on me.” Pusha T finished by saying how becoming a professor was possible because Dr. Hill made him feel like he could do it, and for Pusha T, that was incredibly helpful. He also went on to talk about the support he received from peers and the way they pushed
each other to be great. He also received support members of his Higher Education program who served as mentors to him during his doctoral studies. Currently, Pusha T is an Associate Professor of Higher and Postsecondary Education in the Teachers College and a Faculty Affiliate with the School of Social Transformation.

Summary of Participant Educational Journeys

The educational journeys of these 13 tenured Black male faculty participants retell their stories using the data each participant shared during their individual interviews. This framing of their educational journeys allowed the participants to hold the power of their stories while also providing each participant an opportunity to share their story in an authentic way. This approach allowed all the participants to speak their truth and share how they became the person they are today. Although these participants come from different walks of life, they all have some overlap in their stories. Many participants were inspired by their mothers, fathers and grandparents. Their stories demonstrated the important role that family members play in Black boys pursuing their education. Some participants shared stories about how their fathers played a vital role in their educational journey. This insight is important to highlight because there are so many stereotypes about Black men coming from broken homes or single-parent households and not being successful. These 13 educational journeys counter all the negative stereotypes about Black men and their desire to be successful in education. Furthermore, these stories show that Black men can and will be successful if they are seen and valued in their early life by their family, teachers, and community members. For some participants, they spoke about the impact of Black teachers during their K-12 experience specifically. Sometimes all it took was one Black teacher noticing their potential to affirm them. With this support,
participants believed they could become whatever they set their minds to be. Their stories also amplify the issues that Black boys face as they matriculate through the K-12 school systems and how overcoming issues with race and racism starts way before ever hitting a college campus as a student or college professor. These 13 participants’ stories are living proof that earning tenure is a possibility for Black males at R1 institutions regardless of what challenges they may face during their educational journey.

**Overarching Themes Relevant to the Research Questions**

As a reminder, the first three themes were related specifically to the participants’ educational journeys. In this section, the focus is on the four findings that were identified in answering the research questions. For this research study, four themes survived from the data. Theme four, continued from the educational journey narratives, is *knowing the house rules*. This theme focuses on the understanding of the spoken and unspoken rules of the tenure-track process, along with how Black male faculty are situated in spaces where they must learn how to navigate through the process knowing that the house rules are designed with a purpose that causes a barrier for Black male faculty. The fifth theme is *mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process*. This theme speaks to how Black males on the tenure track are placed in a position where mentorship became a key factor in their success earning tenure. For many participants, that included having access to insider knowledge from mentors during the tenure track process. The sixth theme is *keeping the main thing, the main thing*. This theme is a reminder to Black males on the tenure-track and for those Black males who have high aspirations to pursue the tenure track as a career to know that a road map has been shared to assist with overcoming
barriers and challenges that may present themselves along the journey. The seventh and final theme is *finding your tribe*. This theme is centered around tenured Black male faculty finding belongingness inside and outside of the academy to push through their life as a scholar.

**Table 4.2**

*Overarching Themes Related to the Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4:</strong> Knowing the House Rules.</td>
<td>Participants described needing to know the unspoken rules in academia, both generally and specific to tenure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 5:</strong> Mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process.</td>
<td>Participants valued their professional mentors and the support they provided in their pursuit of tenure.</td>
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<td><strong>Theme 6:</strong> Keeping the main thing, the main thing.</td>
<td>Participants provided recommendations for aspiring Black male professors who may desire to pursue tenure.</td>
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<td><strong>Theme 7:</strong> Finding Your Tribe</td>
<td>Participants described the importance of establishing community both within and outside of the academy</td>
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**Knowing the House Rules**

When it comes to the experiences of Black male faculty at R1 institutions, the first major theme that surfaced was “Knowing the House Rules.” This theme means that Black male faculty should know the cultural norms of the environment that they are entering. Furthermore, Black male faculty should understand that the rules about the tenure-track process may or may not be clear. Some participants were provided the house rules, and they knew from day one what was expected of them on tenure track. These participants knew what they needed to accomplish based on the house rules that were provided to them upon entering the tenure-track position at their institution. Most
participants were not aware of the requirements for earning tenure, were not provided with any guidelines and were left to figure it out on their own. These participants took it upon themselves to ask questions about the requirements and many of the answers about the number of publications needed were very vague or unclear. Those same participants also took the opportunity to ask previously tenured scholars within their department or within their field to share their curriculum vitae with them to get a better understanding of how many publications they had, where they published their articles, what kind of grant funding they were bringing into the institution and how service is viewed within their department. Kendrick Lamar shared his experience:

Okay, so there are no criteria. Here’s the thing I learned. I say this now; being a professor is like knowing how magic works. So, when you get hired, you’re excited. You’re like, “I’m assistant professor. I got my opportunity.” And then you ask people, “How many publications does it take to continue?” Some people were like, "8, 10, 20, 15." Now keep in mind when I got hired, Lamp University was R2, and then they transitioned to R1. So, these people in my building, that’s four professors, they got tenure with eight publications, because they got tenured in 2000, or whenever they got it - back in the day. So, the metrics were different. So, for the university to not get sued, they're not going to tell you on paper explicitly this is the criteria, right? But they will tell you got to publish. And so early on, I had a conversation with my dean about top tier journals. And this was a light bulb moment for me. I said, "Journal Negro Ed, everybody Black. From Du Bois, Ladson Billings, Bill Tate, anybody that's Black is publishing in the Journal Negro Education. I said, "That's my BET award. I got it published there." And he
was like, "That is not a top tier journal." I was like, "Whatever. It is a top tier journal to me."

Kendrick Lamar and many other participants spoke about the house rules of being published in what their white counterparts call “top-tier journals.” For many Black male faculty in academia, the Journal of Negro Education is a “top-tier” journal in their eyes. That gets to the point of Black knowledge being seen and valued in the eyes of others when you enter their space. More specifically, white spaces where the house rules are made up without Black faculty or Black male faculty, to be even more specific. Kendrick Lamar went on to say this in his interview.

But that's when I thought about, well, this is an epistemological racism. If you don't value Black knowledge construction, then I got to write. So that forced me to say, okay, well, I got to publish in Teachers College Record. So, I published in Teachers College Record three times. And I was like, okay, and I published a journal in Negro Education three times. I was like I got to balance it out to give them what they think is important and I got to write for my community. During my third-year review, they did tell me, "You're doing too much service.” They did tell me to scale the service back.

For the participants in this study, who they knew dictated what they knew about the requirements for earning tenure. People would tell the participants things verbally about the requirements. Even when they received the document for the tenure requirements, the documents were very vague and unclear. A part of the house rules is not knowing the rules but still being able to play the game. The participants understood
the house rules mostly applied to them and that this hurdle was just another task that they had to overcome to earn tenure. Tupac had this to share about his experience with knowing the house rules:

I think it was called a Blue Book at the school. They give the university documents, but it's very vague. They're clear, they have researches important, teaching needs to be solid, service. They give you the framework, but in terms of, "You need at least 12 publications, or you need to do this and that," that was more verbally communicated. They didn't put that in writing. But they did verbally communicate that, "Hey, publishing in this journal is more reputable doing this work." I just went against the grain. I published wherever I felt like my work was going to be valued, whether it had a high impact factor or not. I did try to target some of the ones that they talked about, but I kind of went out of my way to do that, because I felt like the work and the flow, for example, I published my first book before I got tenure, and they dissuaded me from writing a book. They were like, "In your field, publishing a book whether it's an academic press or not, that's just not valued as much. You need to worry about that after you get tenure and do that later." I was like, "I'm going to do what I want to do. I want to write this book. If y'all don't value it, don't count it then. Do what you're going to do, but I'm going to do the work that I feel like is important and get it out there in the way that I want to." I ended up getting tenure, but I got a lot of colleagues who didn't, and they did similar things that I did.

Similar to participant Kendrick Lamar, participant Canibus was never provided with the guidelines for earning tenure. Like many other participants, it placed him in a
position to figure it out on his own. That what makes it even more difficult when it comes to navigating this space, especially when this space is mostly white and the work that you do as Black male faculty is centered around uplifting Black and Brown communities. Canibus had this to share about his experience:

I was never given the standards. I did the research myself to download the operating paper. I had downloaded the operating paper because they were constantly changing the standards on me. And I was like, "Listen, if all the people are publishing six to eight articles, with me having basically 22 or 23 articles and eight or nine book chapters, what's the problem?" Here's what's nasty about it, I had one of the chairs tell me that because I did a marginalized area because this was the first time they were hiring in Black philosophy, because I did a marginalized area, it wasn't uncommon to ask me to do more than my white colleagues. And I called it, I said, "Well, that's just flat out racist. You're saying that if you hire Black people, because they do areas that are marginal and new and cutting edge, we got to do three times as much as a white person?" I was like, "To me, that's an HR issue." So, he backed down from that claim. Those are the types of things that I would be told. One colleague said, "Well, some members of the department are uncomfortable with you going up early because well, this other guy in the department actually did a traditional area of philosophy so you would actually go up before him." I was like, "How is any of this my problem? He could have published more. He could have published faster. None of that's my problem." At no point was I given a paper record of tenure requirements or an operating paper that stated, here's the criteria for promotion. When I went to the
website and downloaded, because it was in a small section on the tenure requirements, downloaded the paper, my colleagues told me that even though that's the official document, it wouldn't apply to my case. [...] One of the funny things about this is everyone who got tenured before me that year or previously, had only needed three external letters. The year I went up for tenure, suddenly the rule changed, and we needed seven.

From these recollections of the ways that they learned the house rules, it is important to note two important subthemes. First, is that the tenure process is biased toward Black men. That bias was evident in the ways that participants talked about Black journal publications being devalued by tenure committees. The second is that the tenure process is extremely political. Most participants noted that the tenure process is political. They stressed the importance of knowing who would be reviewing their dossiers for tenure. Knowing who those senior faculty are is critical. Aspiring Black male professors need to be able to network with senior professors and those who can influence their tenure decision. It means being able to “play the game” when it comes to building a network that will work to their advantage in the tenure process. It also requires them to understand the importance of collegiality and embody that. Being likable is part of the politics associated with tenure and can, in some instances, be given as much weight as research, teaching and service.

Kanye West was the most vocal participant when it came to naming the challenges that come along with the politics of tenure. He described the political nature of tenure by saying:
One thing that I have not named that I think is really important to name in the academic politics of one's program department and academic school. … if people want you to get tenure you might get tenure. [Because] they’re going to find a way for you to get tenure. Now. It might be that some folks don't want you to get tenure, and you know they might have to work, you know, a little extra hard to like.

Kanye also stressed the importance of collegiality in tenure decisions:

It's important to be nice to people. Now I have seen some nice people who are just nice, but they're not productive, and it does become really tough. When those folks come up for tenure, because their colleagues, like she, he or they are so nice. But they ain't got the goods right, but it is really important to be nice. People have a bias for niceness, for sure.

This is an important note when it comes to knowing the house rules because tenure is not just about tenure. It is important that aspiring Black male professors understand that they must also fit well into the fabric of their departments and the larger institution. It will be a major factor in their tenure decision due to the bias that exists, and knowing that upfront will help inform how they move through their academic journeys.

Summary

For Black male faculty, knowing the house rules means that the rules were only created as roadblocks to keep you out of this space. For some participants navigating the house rules was more challenging than for others. However, all the participants in this study agreed that regardless of receiving or not receiving the documents for the tenure
that the process was very vague and very unclear. That left all the participants in a place to create strategies in order to maneuver around the house rules of R1 institutions to earn tenure and promotion.

**Mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process.**

The fifth major theme that surfaced was mentorship and how mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process. For Black male faculty, it is even more critical given the landscape of R1 institutions and the low number of Black males who have earned tenure or who are on the tenure track. Most participants in this research study were not assigned a mentor when they entered the professoriate at their institution. Many participants sought out their own mentors. All the participants in this study acknowledged that mentorship was needed, whether it was a formal mentorship relationship, informal mentorship relationship or peer-to-peer mentorship. Furthermore, mentorship allowed participants to feel supported and allowed them to share their ideas before moving forward with those ideas. This approach provided some participants an opportunity to be critical of the decisions they were making while on the tenure track. For example, Jaheim spoke about his experience with mentorship and how it played a critical role in his earning tenure.

I'll start by explaining how I view mentoring. I think everyone should have three levels of mentors. I think, well we all have the mentor who's kind of above us. Those people for me, were not at [Spinning University]. They were at other universities and the role they played was interesting in shaping who might even be my external reviewers, and warning me who not to write with, because in a field so small like mine saying, "Hey, if you write with this person, you basically
burned them. They won't be able to write for you." But they also gave me opportunities for publication, they gave me end routes to publishing they gave me end routes to leadership. It's no coincidence that I am following [Dr. Dee] in leadership in [in a professional research organization]. It makes sense, because she's my mentor, and when people were recommending people, of course, she would recommend me. I know that sounds political, but that's the game. Then, I think there are peer mentors, like people from other universities who were instrumental for me and going back and forth. [...] Ultimately at [Spinning], that played a huge role because those external mentors became important to helping me understand the field and where it was going.

For Black males on tenure track, mentoring, peer mentoring, or some type of formal mentoring process is a necessity. Often Black male faculty are the only faculty of color or the only male faculty of color within their departments. In many cases, this leaves Black male faculty with figuring out the tenure-track process on their own regardless of whether they receive the requirements or not. Therefore, going through the process is even more difficult for Black males, especially without the support and mentoring of colleagues. Although same-ethnicity mentorship is favored in many cases, it is sometimes impossible to have a mentor that has the same ethnicity because of the lack of diversity of faculty on the campus of R1 institutions. Some participants have had success with mentors regardless of their ethnicity or gender. Madsen (2007) noted that a supportive relationship was essential no matter what race or ethnicity. For example, one study participant, Kanye West, is a strong supporter of mentorship since he had such a positive experience with his mentors. Kanye West talked about his experience with
diverse mentorship, which included individuals from different ethnicities, genders, and peer-to-peer mentorship.

It is important to have diverse mentors. When I got to [Zone] State, I was assigned a mentor, and she was a Black woman, wonderful Black woman. She left at the end of year two to go to a different university. Then there was a white guy who was assigned to be my mentor. He was great. They had very different approaches, but nonetheless, they both were solidly in my corner, and I felt very much supported by them, and I knew that I could go to them. I also had the support of my doctoral advisor in the first chapter of my career. Well, I mean even now, like if I need something from him, I know that he absolutely is going to come through. He continued to be a resource and a mentor for me. Then there was a [Sheila], a Latina. Whom I met and formed a great friendship with in those first two years as a non-tenure track faculty. So, we're talking A Black woman, a white guy, another white guy, and a Latina. Somewhere along the way I met [Mr. Kay], a Black man, who also became just this incredible mentor. Then, of course, it's my best friend, [Laura], and I were in the same doctoral cohort at [Flower University]. We both started the tenure track the same year. We're roughly the same age. [Laura] and I have had this beautiful peer-mentoring relationship with each other.

Unlike Kanye West, MC Hammer was not assigned a mentor while on the tenure track. He shared some strong thoughts about the role that a mentor can play in the success of a mentee on the tenure track at R1 institutions. For many Black males in academia, it
could be very challenging on the tenure-track when you are not assigned a mentor, when there is not a mentorship program at your university, or when no one in your department extends their hand to mentor you as a junior faculty member. MC Hammer felt that mentorship is a critical component, and without the right mentorship, it can be an uphill battle when you are facing unfamiliar territory like the tenure track process. For Black male faculty, it is important to know the nuances of the tenure-track process and how mentorship can be beneficial for your career long term. MC Hammer stated:

I think that mentorship is critical, and mentorship can not only make or break a person's career, but I think largely it could separate a person who's actually able to just get to the edge of space versus going to the moon. I think that it's critical. I am not at the moon, I've reached the edge of space, and that's kind of propelling with spotty mentorship. But if I had the right people to write with, like papers, I would have a lot more if I could be writing with a mentor, if I could be exploring new questions in the literature, if I could write with a senior person that is writing grants really well, then I will be at a different place in my career as far as my level of funding, my proximity to full professorship, not only here, but nationally. I can be probably more nationally recognized. And I can't blame that all on mentorship, but I can say it's a huge contributor.

Like other participants in this research study, Quincy Jones also benefited from having mentors and talks about how mentorship is a critical element during the tenure-track process. He even spoke about how mentorship continues to play an important factor in his development as a scholar today, along with how mentors have set him up for future
success beyond earning the rank of associate professor. Quincy Jones shared his thoughts on mentorship and the impact that mentorship had on his career in academia.

Mentorship is critical to the tenure process because people can see what you don't see in the future. They've been where you're trying to get to, and they can help move you along a particular path. I think it's critical, and then when I transitioned to faculty, because I had so much great mentorship as a doctoral student, when I came in faculty, I came in that joint blazing. I already knew how to teach. I wasn't never worried about that. I've been a teacher all my life. On the research side, I already had publications. I'd already been through that process repeatedly. It was just rinse and repeat at that point. I had one faculty tell me, and I did it my first year, was like, "Your cadence should be one publication a month." I did that for the first year, so I just wrote one publication a month, whether it was a book chapter or journal article. That was helpful in terms of mentorship just setting me up for later.

Summary

Many of the participants were not assigned a mentor within their department when they entered their position on the tenure track. All 13 participants recognized the importance of mentorship relationships and how mentorship can play a critical role in the growth and development of a scholar beyond earning tenure. All participants had mentors. Mentorship is not bound by age. Peer-to-peer mentorship also emerged as an important type of mentorship that many participants experienced. Finally, the doctoral advisor-advisee mentorship relationship does not end once the Black male student graduates but continues throughout the tenure-track process.
**Keeping the main thing, the main thing.**

The third research question is, “What recommendations would tenured Black male professors offer to aspiring Black male professors pursuing the professoriate on the tenure track?” Each participant offered their advice to future Black male faculty on navigating the tenure-track process. The recommendations that the participants provided fit into three subthemes: cultivate your community inside of academia, maintain your identity, and advocate for yourself. These recommendations answer the research question while centering the voices of the 13 participants in this research study.

**Cultivate Your Community Inside of Academia**

Many of the participants talked about the importance of surrounding themselves with people who understood the nature of academia. These people within the system occasionally serve as mentors but for the most part, they serve as colleagues and close friends. Participants also noted that having a community within academia was essential to their ability to succeed. Jaheim elaborated:

I will start off by saying, get to know people in the field. The people in the field will save you or they will ruin you. One of the two. And I say that, not as a threat but I see it in terms of there are not many of us on campus, so we got to find some community somewhere. And that somewhere it's usually at chair big national conventions, conferences in your subfield. Find that person who's willing to open the doors for you even if they're not going to publish with you.

For Jaheim, having a community within academia was not only essential to aspiring Black male professors’ success on the tenure track, it was also critical for their success in their field. The establishment of their community provided both support and
opportunities for professional collaborations, which could take their careers to a new level.

Quincy Jones also discussed the importance of having mentors who can support aspiring Black male professors’ development. He elaborated:

You must have mentors for different things. Like I mentioned, you need a mentor for research. If you struggle with teaching, you should get you a mentor at that.

You should get a mentor around grant funding or secure a PD. If you don't have a mentor that can do it for you, go out and do professional development. Use your funds that the university will give you to go get professional development in areas where you aren't strong.

This kind of specialized selection of community is intended to ensure that aspiring Black male professors feel supported in every aspect of their roles. The areas that Quincy Jones listed are also factors that are considered during tenure reviews, so acquiring specialized mentors is not just about providing moral support; it also gives aspiring Black male professors a fighting chance when it comes to being prepared to pursue tenure successfully. Kendrick Lamar also echoed a similar sentiment, saying:

The second thing is you got to have accountability partners for your writing. So, you're never done. So even though I want to be a full professor, even though I got tenure, I still got to grind. It isn’t going to be the same level of grind, because now I can settle and focus maybe two publications a year, because my job isn’t on the line. I got to have somebody saying, "Have you wrote? When was the last time you got someone under review? When we meet at ASHE or AERA, let's sit down for three hours and top it up about writing." So, you got to have that.
Mos Def noted that cultivating community could also provide aspiring Black male professors with valuable lessons around the campuses:

Join an organization, word. Get to know the campus. I used to be president of Black faculty staff caucus. I learned so much about this place and there's so many connections by being the president of the caucus. So, talk to people that are different outside your regular sphere.

This recommendation connects with Theme 1 in that it connects cultivating a community inside of academia with learning the house rules. Knowing what to expect and when can empower aspiring Black male professors to be successful in their roles and as they pursue tenure.

Not only was cultivating a community within academia viewed as an essential factor in the success of aspiring Black male professors, but Kanye West also described it as an act of resistance. He encouraged aspiring Black male faculty members “to defiantly be in community with other Black scholars who are going through the tenure review process, both locally at their own university and peer institutions across the country.”

Here, Kanye West is encouraging Black men to dare to take up space in spaces that were not designed to accommodate them or honor their cultural identities. By doing so, they not only find a community within academia, but they also establish a pipeline through which aspiring Black male faculty can move through as they pursue tenure.

**Maintain Your Identity**

When navigating spaces that treat Blackness as an identity that belongs on the margins, it can be difficult to maintain an authentic sense of self. It becomes easier to assimilate, swapping cultural identities for something more palatable for Whiteness. The
participants in this study were deeply familiar with this concept and recommended that aspiring Black male professors maintain their identities, no matter what.

One way of maintaining their identities was to remain grounded in their reasons for entering academia in the first place. Kendrick Lamar was straightforward with his advice for aspiring Black male professors:

… you got to stay black, man. You got to be yourself. Don't compromise your integrity. Be unashamed in your blackness because people are going to try to get you to... Sometimes they're going to try to get you to be on other things when if your focus is about black people, that's okay. Don't feel like you got to do extra stuff. Just do the black stuff. If that's what you want to do, that's cool.

Maintaining identity is not just about being who you are. For Kendrick Lamar, it also meant being willing to pursue research of Black issues even though colleagues may warn against a Black man boxing himself into being “the Black researcher.” Pusha T also echoed this sentiment by saying:

Find out what's important to you and go after it and be unapologetic about it and build. And just invest as much as you can in community. Cause the community will decrease your anxiety or imposter syndrome and you will do your best work when you're not being reactive to pressures around you and you're just being creative and innovative in your own space.

Jaheim, on the other hand, encouraged aspiring Black male professors to maintain their identities as a radical response to the racism and discrimination present in academia.
He elaborated:

Remember that at the core you're going to face the discrimination. And I'm torn between telling people, "Don't let people run you out of there." But also, all martyrs end up dead. You don't owe nobody sacrificing your peace to be somewhere that you're not wanted.

These words from Tupac succinctly summarize the maintain your identity recommendation, “I would just say know your why. Stay focused on your why and give yourself grace. It's a tough process to get tenure. Everybody does it differently.” Staying connected to self is a useful tool to ensure that aspiring Black male professors can preserve their peace and wholeness while also contributing to the academy.

**Advocate for Yourself**

Self-advocacy was also a common theme among the participants’ recommendations. This was aligned with the idea that an aspiring Black male professor would need to be able to strategically chase the opportunities presented to him. Lil’ Flip noted:

Now, you can't take every opportunity, but you should take most opportunities that come because you don't know which ones which, and if you're not completely oversubscribed, you should be subscribed up to here. You should make sure that you have as many options as possible because you don't know which one's going to pan out. So, you get your hustle on and stuff works out, and then you get to be more selective as time goes on," but the other piece of it is just don't be discouraged.
Here, Lil Flip is saying that aspiring Black male professors need to be able to understand the importance of publishing regularly and then position themselves to experience success by publishing often. Big Boi echoed that idea by saying:

Don't get distracted. Write, write, write. You need to write. Get your research out. Don't get distracted by if it gets rejected. Don't get distracted by the microaggressions. I think speak up. I think a lot of times we get quiet, or we get kind of recluse. Also know the promotion to tenure, your faculty handbook at the university and the department and the college level. Go for grants. If you do have a mentor, male mentor, or female mentor, make sure that you can trust them, having conversations with them, but you must publish. You must get them publications out. You must get the grants. That's the passport to getting a tenure at a Research 1. There is no way to get around that, especially at historically white and predominantly white institutions.

Again, knowing the house rules is essential when advocating for self. When aspiring Black male professors know what the pathway to tenure will require, they can be more strategic in how they pursue tenure. This is important because it allows them to pace themselves, preserving their intellectual capacity and contributions to the field. MC Hammer discussed a similar idea:

Make sure you're confident that you're going to be able to get through those hoops. So, ask for those tenure promotional requirements before you ever say yes. "What is the expectation of me? Also, what is going to be my, beyond salary, are you going to set me up with a mentor? What is the plan for mentorship within this department?" I would make sure that I had someone who was in that department,
or at least at that university, who I not only wanted to work with, but it was
somebody that was committed to support me, and it was a believable level of
support. I would ask other junior faculty who may be being mentored with them
what type of mentor they are, to make sure that mentoring style matches what
your needs are.

For MC Hammer, self-advocacy was not just about the confidence that comes
with knowing what to expect. For him, it was also about encouraging aspiring Black male
professors to speak up and make demands for the things that will contribute to their
success.

Summary

This research study provided a space for the voices of 13 Black male tenured
faculty at R1 institutions to be heard. The issues that Black male faculty are facing on the
tenure-track must continue to be researched in order to eliminate the various challenges
for future Black male faculty on the tenure-track and more specifically for those Black
male faculty on the tenure-track at R1 institutions.

The recommendations of the 13 participants can be used by current assistant
professors and those who are interested in a career in the professoriate to help eradicate
some issues correlated with earning tenure. For Black male faculty, these
recommendations are important to make them aware of what they may face during the
tenure-track process at an R1 institution. For current tenure-track faculty or those
considering academia, the advice from the 13 participants can serve as a roadmap for
strategies that could assist in maneuvering the tenure-track process with less
contentiousness than their counterparts and predecessors. Using the recommendations of
the 13 participants gives Black male faculty a clear view of what to look for, how to prepare for the tenure-track process from the onset, and how to navigate the system at R1 institutions. Furthermore, Black male faculty will be aware of the importance of understanding the environment of the institution that they are entering, knowing the requirements for publications, and being mindful of identifying a mentor in their department, across campus or at another institution.

**Finding Your Tribe**

The final theme that emerged during the data analysis was the concept of belongingness inside and outside the academy. This notion of “Finding Your Tribe” centers around tenured Black male faculty finding their place of belongingness before, during and after earning tenure on the tenure track. For the participants in this research study, belongingness was important not only for their success but also for their life outside of the academic space. Finding Your Tribe played a significant role in their life, personally and professionally. Some of the participants in this study spoke about their wives and children being the people that helped them find a sense of belongingness outside of the academy. For example, Mos Def spoke about his wife and how she plays a role in making sure he steps away from his work and how she lets him know when to slow down. For Mos Def, his wife was the person in his tribe that provided a sense of belongingness outside of the academy, and she was the person who cared about him outside of his work as a scholar. This is what Mos Def had to share when it came to finding his place of belongingness:
The woman that I’m married to worked on campus before. Now she works in the
governor's office, but she worked on campus when we first met each other. And
what I have learned, what has changed my life is I married up. My wife is
brilliant. She's brilliant in a way that I'm not brilliant. I'm an open book, she's not.
She knows to tell me, shut your mouth, you don't need to tell everybody
everything you. I've learned to listen when she says that. There's an excitement
that I get about the place that she can bring it down and she can tell me, "You
worked enough. Let that go. You got to find other stuff. I don't want to talk to you
about this anymore because you've been talking about this for eight hours." So,
find somebody that cares about you or community that cares about you other than
their job that could care less.

Like the experience of Mos Def, Drake and Big Boi also shared their experiences
of finding belongingness through the tribe. Their experiences speak to how Black men
rely heavily on their faith, family, and friends to find their place of belongingness inside
and outside of academia. For them, it centered around faith, family and friends. For
example, Drake had this to share about his experience when it came to belongingness and
finding your tribe:

I would say just my faith, my relationship with my wife and the support of my
family primarily, just telling me, keep going, you can do it, really was important
to me and it really kind of helped me to stay motivated and to keep my confidence
level up going through that process.
Big Boi spoke about his family, specifically his wife and children, being the people that are his breathing space outside of his academic space. With his wife being in the academic space as well, working on research together was helpful in him finding a place of belongingness inside the academy. This has not only provided him support, but a writing partner who is also his partner outside of the academy. This is what Big Boi had to share about his experience when it came to belongingness:

I'm married with kids. That's one. I got friends. I got friend groups, so just the same friends outside of the academy, but not in my institution. It's funny, most of my life, now, where I'm at, kids and the family take up a lot. Lately, I've been going to a lot of football games, so we go and do that. It's probably mostly my kids and they're in a lot of things and work. So that's probably where most of the respite comes. My wife and I do stuff. We work on stuff and then I got friends in the community.

Three other participants also shared their experiences when it came to belongingness in the academy and outside of the academy. Tupac talked about the importance of family. For him, that included immediate family and extended family. He described the ways that his family had always supported him as his tribe long before he earned the letters Dr. in front of his name. He went on to speak about how his friends have been supportive and a part of his belongingness outside of higher education. However, inside the academy, Tupac has found a sense of belongingness by attending conferences and connecting with like-minded scholars within his field of study. This has allowed him to build connections with different scholars in a way to share knowledge.
among peers. Lastly, Tupac talked about how music and church have been vital for his belongingness. For Tupac, music allowed him to connect with the different artists that share their experiences about grinding through whatever they are dealing with, and he uses it as a tool to push through the challenges that he faces. Tupac also spoke about the church and how the church has been a part of his sense of belongingness since he was a child:

My immediate family, like family I grew up with, my extended family, who loved me before I was Dr. Tupac. They loved Tupac. They loved me coming out of my mom's womb. My homeboys who are working in different fields, we went to school together, whether high school or college. Listening to music that I vibe with keeps me connected to the culture in that way. At this stage of my life, I listen to scholars' podcasts and interviews in other fields, and many of them I've emailed, and we've had phone conversations. We're not friends, but we've interacted and I kind of take belonging in the work that they're doing, my work is in that vein too. It's just in my own lane with it. Like I said, just listening to other artists like whether it's hip-hop artists or whoever, they're grinding in their own lane. When I hear J. Cole rapping, or when I hear Nipsey and them talking about it, I'm flowing too. It just I'm flowing in my lane. I get a sense of belonging from them. Other faculty in the field who are doing different work. Oftentimes similar racial and cultural background. In other cases, we just share common values around the work we're doing. I go to the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport. There's a group of multiracial scholars that I vibe with, and
we follow and support each other's work. Going to church. I've been in church my entire life, so that provides me with a sense of belonging.

Like the previous participants, Kendrick Lamar felt that family was important when it came to belongingness. Kendrick Lamar shared that this sense of belongingness has been important since his doctoral journey. With him being 20 hours away from his family and having to miss various functions, it was clear that moving close to family for his tenure-track position was going to be critical for his success. He also spoke about how his fraternity brothers, church and joining professional organizations were instrumental to his sense of belongingness on a personal and professional level. Kendrick Lamar shared how being a part of professional organizations allowed him to be validated at times when he felt that he needed to be reminded of his purpose and the importance of why he does critical race research that centers on Black communities. Kendrick Lamar had this to say when it came to belongingness from a personal and professional standpoint:

So personal, of course, because I'm a Mason, so being in membership with my Masonic brothers, got my Alpha brothers too. So being in membership with my fraternity brothers. Church, of course, and going back home. The one thing about Uptown University, it is a 20-hour drive. So, when I was working on my doctorate, we didn't go home a lot. We missed weddings and graduations and births and funerals and stuff. Part of the reason why I came to Lamp University is because it's five hours away. So quick access to family was cool for belongingness. Professionally, I think you got to join organizations. I joined AERA, I joined ASHE, I joined ACPA and I joined the CRESCA, which is like
the critical race theory organization. And so, in those organizations you're validated. I consider church, family, and organizations in ways that it helped me with my belongings, which validates purpose, so for me, it's like why am I doing all this? I tell people my research agenda is emancipatory. Everything I write about is about freeing black folks. There's going to be times when you got doubt, and so my belonging help reassure my purpose, which increased my self-efficacy and decreased my doubt.

Like Kendrick Lamar, MC Hammer found a sense of belongingness when it came to organizations within the institution and outside the institution. MC Hammer speaks about connecting with other professionals who were not a part of his institution and how connecting with them builds belongingness due to everyone having overlapping struggles of being a Black and male in spaces where moving up in leadership is not easy. MC Hammer also speaks about how being a part of the Black Faculty Caucus has been beneficial for engaging with other Black faculty on campus, and through the organization, he has found belongingness through this community within the campus community. This is what MC Hammer had to share about his experience when it came to belongingness:

I must connect with people who are like me, and it's not just people who are like me, it's others as well who are cool. Usually, I connect with people either outside of the university who may be professionals, but they may be in other areas. They may be establishing careers in medicine, or they may be in law, but they still have the same kind of struggles and they're still trying to move up a totem pole to
advance. To advance in leadership roles within their respective institutions. I find belongingness there, but within the academy you have various cohorts and activities that you're involved in that creates a level of comradery. It might be a committee that you serve on, like right now I'm part of a leadership cohort called Pipeline for Academic Leaders. You meet people through certain activities outside your department. I can give you some examples. Black Faculty Caucus is a place where we're able to mesh, meld and kind of talk about issues that all affect us as a Black faculty. You meet people there, and once you start going to those meetings, you start to meet people that brings you a sense of belonging. True belonging are the people closest to me, would be people who looked as much like me as possible, and they might be experiencing what I'm experiencing.

Summary

For Black male faculty, it is important to have a sense of belongingness inside and outside of the academy. Of the participants in this study, many of them spoke about their family being those individuals who provide them with a sense of belongingness. Participants spoke about their relationship with their wife or partner and how that person allowed them to stay balanced and focused on things outside of their research. They also discussed the responsibilities associated with having children and how they kept them grounded in ways. That included a discussion of the ways that parenthood keeps them busy in making sure they are present as a father the same way they are present as a scholar. Participants spoke about the importance of going to church and how their faith was a part of their belongingness, and how that was installed in them since they were a child. Lastly, the importance of finding professional organizations that will validate you
when you are surrounded by like-minded people who are trying to overcome similar challenges and struggles within the academic community.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of tenured Black male faculty during their tenure-track process at a Research 1 institution. The analysis of the findings began with developing a narrative of the participants’ educational journeys. From those narratives, participants consistently talked about their motivation to succeed academically and how their community played a vital role in their academic development. The narratives of the participants’ educational journeys also indicated that growing up in low-income households does not automatically translate to low achievement. Most participants grew up in low-income households and experienced high levels of success when it came to their academic pursuits, defying the stereotypes about students from low-income backgrounds.

The tenured Black male faculty in this study spoke about the importance of “knowing the house rules.” Most importantly, knowing what the requirements are for earning tenure at your prospective institutions. That includes knowing how many publications you need to have because publishing is the currency to earning tenure at a Research 1 institution. Many participants spoke about connecting with recently tenured faculty members both in their department and at other institutions to examine their curriculum vitae and better understand what they did to earn tenure. This strategy was considered a roadmap for many participants and especially for the participants who were not provided the tenure and promotion guidelines from their department or institution.
Because they sought understanding of the tenure process, all the participants earned tenure with a unanimous vote. One participant spoke about the pushback that they received for going up for tenure during their third and not their fifth year like others have done. However, this participant had 22 articles and eight book chapters, and edited books and had met the tenure requirements three or four times over. This example demonstrates that even meeting the requirements for tenure depends on who is willing to support you in your department which makes a difference within your process. The other 12 participants, they did not receive pushback from their counterparts. They also understood that by being a Black man on the tenure track, they not only had to publish but also publish in a way that went above and beyond the requirements to earn tenure.

Participants in this research study consistently agreed that mentorship during the tenure-track process is a critical element to earning tenure. Many participants spoke about how their doctoral advisors served as mentors for them during their doctoral journey and still serve as mentors for them today. They noted that Black males in the academy need someone that is supporting them and guiding them through the tenure-track process. Most of the participants spoke about not having direct access to mentorship in their department but having access to mentorship from senior faculty across campus or at other institutions. It is clear from their message that Research 1 institutions lack Black male faculty and, more specifically, access to senior Black male faculty within various departments. Furthermore, having Black male faculty as mentors is important when it comes to having a mentor that understands the struggle of being a Black man in the academy. Some participants stated that mentorship comes from any senior faculty member regardless of race or gender. The participants noted the importance of being
mentors to others, and some participants noted the impactful role that peer-to-peer mentorship plays in earning tenure.

Outside of mentorship playing a critical role in the tenure-track process, participants also shared the importance of building community and finding your tribe. All participants spoke about the importance of their family and their family being their biggest supporters during the process. Some participants shared how their significant other and/or children allowed them to get away from the work of the academy to focus on life outside of research and higher education. Others talked about being a part of a fraternity and how being among fraternity brothers was an outlet for them. Participants also spoke about how being a part of different academic organizations was helpful because they were surrounded by like-minded individuals who could share their experiences and provide advice.

This study demonstrates that despite the many challenges that Black men must overcome in the academy, they can excel in the professoriate. These 13 participants are proof as they were able to preserve through it all and earn the rank of associate or full professor. More importantly, they shared recommendations for other Black men to utilize as they go through the tenure-track process.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions. Thirteen tenured Black male faculty were interviewed in this narrative research study. The participants in this study had all earned the rank of associate or full professor at a Research 1 institution. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?
2. What role has mentorship played in the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?
3. What recommendations would tenured Black male professors offer to aspiring Black male professors pursuing the professoriate on the tenure-track?

Summary of the Findings

The study was designed to get a better understanding of what Black male faculty experience while on the tenure track at a Research 1 institution. Given the challenges that Black male faculty have endured historically in the academy and society, it is important to examine the educational environment in which they work. Knowing how disproportionality and attrition affect Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions, efforts should be made to understand their experience and find solutions to recruit, retain
and promote Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions. As presented in Chapter Four, seven major findings emerged from this study: (1) The Black Community was a valuable source of academic motivation, (2) A low-income household does not mean low achievement, (3) The Academic Community plays a role in Black males’ decisions to pursue graduate education, (4) Knowing the house rules, (5) Mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process, (6) Keeping the main thing, the main thing, and (7) Finding your tribe. Themes 1-3 related to their educational journey before the professoriate. Themes 4-7 focus on their experiences in tenure-track positions.

In the first theme, the Black community was a valuable source of academic motivation, participants described being able to find the motivation to succeed academically regardless of the many barriers and challenges that they had to overcome at home or in the school system. Their educational journey narratives indicated that a low-income household, the second theme, did not mean low achievement. Most participants grew up in low-income homes and experienced the same academic outcomes as those who grew up in middle-class families. A third theme was that the educational community played a role in the participants’ decision to pursue graduate education. Their communities, which consisted of advisors, mentors, professors, etc., were the reason they decided to continue their education after earning their undergraduate degrees.

The fourth theme, knowing the house rules, is focused on knowing the written and unwritten expectations for earning tenure at your institution. Within this theme, participants discussed the importance of needing to ask for information about tenure criteria before taking a job. Coupled with that is a need to have conversations from the
beginning to learn the unwritten rules. The fifth theme, mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process, participants discussed how difficult it is to get through the tenure process without a mentor, and mentorship may have to happen at another institution. Mentors can be white males or white females, but it is important to have Black mentors and specifically Black male mentors, because they understand what it means to be Black and male predominantly white spaces. The sixth theme, keeping the main thing, the main thing, is a synopsis of the first two themes. In this theme, participants were reminded that publishing is their currency and discussed the importance of staying true to themselves and their research. Finally, participants discussed how key it was to find their external community as well. These findings provide a roadmap for Black male faculty who want to pursue the tenure track and those who are already on the tenure track. After analyzing the data, it was very clear that the requirements for tenure and promotion were vague and unclear to study participants. Black male faculty were self-consciously aware that they had to do more than what was expected of them to earn tenure at their perspective institution. For many participants, that included publishing above a certain number of articles and ensuring that they balanced publishing in “top-tier” journals and journals that were salient to their research (i.e., The Journal of Negro Education and The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education).

**Relationship to CRT**

Critical race scholarship explores the endemic and historical implications of racism in society while also analyzing the mechanisms by which such oppression and discriminatory practices are reproduced in institutions and ways such practices can be confronted and dismantled (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1995; Lawrence, 1991; Solórzano &
Yosso, 2002). One method to understanding how such systems impact Black and brown individuals is by providing an avenue for their lived experiences to be expressed. An essential tool, or tenet, of CRT scholarship that allows for such narratives to be captured is counter-storytelling. In the case of this study, centering the experiences of Black tenured professors navigating predominately white institutions of higher learning allowed for their voices and stories to be prioritized and amplified on a level largely absent in education scholarship (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Stanley, 2006). As such, counter-storytelling served as the necessary methodological lens to approach this work as it not only allowed me to highlight and share the lived experiences of my participants, but it also allowed me to provide recommendations for administrators of Research 1 institutions as well as for prospective Black men who aspire to reach the level of academic and professional attainment as my participants.

Lawrence (1991) suggests that narratives validate common experiences among Black people, hold a transformative, “pervasive power”, and have historically served as a “gift” from and for Black communities. Additionally, Black stories have largely been absent in society and/or have been hindered by biased and stereotypical caricatures of their experiences (p. 2237, 2279). Lawrence adds:

If the Word is to validate and legitimate the experience of those it seeks to serve, its form as well as it content must say to our brothers and sisters that what you see, think, and feel, the way you experience life and your creative articulation of that experience, is scholarship/art – is valid and of value. (p. 2278)
Considering the power of narratives and its implications in the Black community, counter-storytelling must continue to be used to analyze the stories of Black male faculty as a tool to center their voices and to ensure that their stories are being told from their lived experiences. For the 13 participants interviewed, capturing their narratives allowed me to counter perceptions of Black professional attainment in academia by providing them a voice that is often overlooked, underrepresented and systemically silenced in predominately white spaces in higher learning; provides a source of knowledge and empowerment for other Black men in academia pursuing tenure; provides considerations for reshaping the tenure track process for Black academics as well as confront systemic inequities in the tenure process that seek to hinder and prevent access for Black men.

**Recommendations for Black Male Faculty**

These recommendations, in addition to the recommendations offered by the participants, are strategies to assist Black male faculty as they move through the tenure and promotion process successfully.

1. Collaborate with other scholars regardless of their race or gender. Choose individuals that have similar personality traits and who are perceived positively in your institution and in research communities.

2. If you are assigned a mentor, be cognizant of how that person is treated and perceived within your department and institution. You do not want a mentor to be a bad reflection upon you. If possible, choose someone who is respected and valued within your department.
3. Seek outside mentors. Whether you are assigned a mentor or not, seek a mentor that is outside of your institution for unbiased advice. In addition, seek a person that is senior to you and has knowledge of your field and successful experience with the tenure and promotion process.

4. Document everything. Keep all communications related to tenure and promotion. In addition, from the first day at the university, keep a running account of all your work as it relates to tenure and promotion. This will help in not having to search for items when it is time to compile your dossier for submission.

5. When it comes to publishing articles, you must have a balance between articles that are perceived as “top-tier” journal articles and journal articles that provide a space for Black scholars to address research that impact their communities. You can win a Grammy but understand the BET Awards are just as important to your community.

6. Self-care is important. Make sure to make time for yourself mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. If you are not functioning at your best, it will affect your work. Remember, you cannot pour from an empty cup.

7. Make sure to find your community within your community. That could be joining the Black Faculty Caucus and/or joining organizations with like-minded scholars doing similar work on marginalized communities (i.e., the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education).

**Implications**

The vision for this project was inspired by the researcher’s personal experiences at Research 1 institutions and by his advisor, who was an Assistant Professor during the
time that the researcher started the Ph.D. program. During the researcher’s time in the graduate program, the researcher only saw one or two Black male faculty members or none within my program. From there, the researcher became interested in understanding what tenured Black male faculty experience at Research 1 institutions. Additionally, this research study desired to identify strategies for Black male faculty to succeed in the tenure and promotion process at a Research 1 institution. Along with providing valuable insight to Black males who are interested in pursuing the professoriate as a career. If Research 1 institutions intend to make commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is imperative they are being supportive of Black male faculty through the tenure and promotion process. That starts with recruiting, retaining, and promoting Black male faculty to full professors. The target sample for this study revealed just how meager the representation of tenured Black male faculty is at Research 1 institutions. However, the administration could implement specific programs that would help increase tenure-track opportunities for Black males. For example, institutions could invest in a postdoctoral bridge program for Black males across campus. This program could be housed in the Diversity Office and funded in a way that each college on the campus received two Black male postdoctoral scholars who would have the opportunity to move into tenure-track positions after completing their two years in the postdoctoral program. Given the low number of potential participants who fit the sample demographic, university names received pseudonyms in addition to the participants to protect the anonymity of the participants who would otherwise be almost immediately recognizable. Future studies with this targeted sample may seek to include tenured Black male faculty from outside of Research 1 institutions. Conducting research on gay Black male faculty would also help
get a better understanding of their experiences in academia. This research offers significant insight into the experiences of tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions who often feel isolated and/or underrepresented in their departments, colleges, and institutions. The research provided a roadmap of how the participants navigated the tenure process and the enhancement of their experiences.

**Recommendations for R1 Institutions**

These recommendations are offered to assist department chairs, deans, provosts and college/university presidents with improving the recruitment, retention, and, most importantly, the promotion of Black male faculty to associate and full professor at R1 institutions.

1. Immediately upon hire and before junior faculty members arrive on your college/university campus, they should be informed of the tenure and promotion process to include their contractual requirements concerning research, teaching, and service. More specifically, the number of publications required to earn tenure should be documented in the tenure and promotion packet, and the type of publications considered and accepted scholarship, i.e., peer-reviewed journal articles, book reviews, book chapters, and/or publishing books. Making this information available and clear allows Black male junior faculty on the tenure track to understand the tenure and promotion process better. It also provides a sense of transparency for the institutions, allowing them to display their commitment to not being a part of the “unspoken rules” for the tenure and promotion process that many Black male faculty are not privileged to.
2. Research 1 institutions must ensure equitable research funds across departments for junior faculty upon hire. This would put Black male junior faculty in a position where they do not have to negotiate their funds, which may cause them to earn lesser research dollars than their white counterparts. Providing the funds equitably across the departments would place all junior faculty at the same level regarding their start-up package for conducting research. This allows institutions to not favor some junior faculty over others within the same department, as they are all expected to produce the same level of study to earn tenure and promotion.

3. Mentorship is critical for the tenure-track process at R1 institutions. Therefore, R1 institutions need to ensure that every junior faculty is provided a member before starting their new role. More specifically, Black male junior faculty must be paired with a senior faculty member who holds the associate or full professor rank to guide them through the tenure-track process. These mentors should come from within their department or college to help Black male junior faculty navigate the tenure-track process and guide them through any barriers and challenges they may face. Assigning junior faculty with senior faculty mentors who can and are willing to assist in this process will be critical for retaining and promoting Black male junior faculty.

4. Create and/or support the Black Faculty Caucus on your campus with funding and resources. Many Black faculty, specifically Black male faculty, feel isolated within their department from being the only person of color within their department. However, the Black Faculty Caucus is a place where Black male faculty can find a community within a community on their campus. This allows
Black male faculty to connect with other faculty who look like them and may face similar challenges on campus. Having a community to share like-minded ideas and scholars helps create a space of belongingness for Black male faculty. At R1 institutions, this is important for providing Black male faculty a space to build connections with other Black scholars across campus. Where R1 institutions invest their money shows who and what they are committed to supporting for the growth and overall development of the institution.

5. My last and final recommendation is a call for R1 institutions to intentionally recruit and retain Black male faculty by creating an initiative called the Black Male Bridge to Faculty Postdoctoral Program. This program will assist with recruiting Black males to postdoctoral positions across campus with the option for them to start tenure-track positions after completing the program in two years. Each department could select up to two Black males for their postdoctoral positions. This program will be set up to grow their faculty and, more specifically, to increase the number of Black male faculty on campus. The postdoctoral program would be most beneficial designed as a cohort model that would allow the Black males across campus to engage with each other through peer-to-peer mentoring. Additionally, they would be paired with a senior faculty mentor from within their department to serve as their development coach for their future tenure-track faculty position. The postdoctoral positions for Black males must be fully funded at an assistant professor's salary level and provided with equitable startup funds for research, depending on their academic department. Lastly, R1 institutions should ensure that the research being conducted during their two-year
postdoctoral position will count toward their dossier for tenure and promotion at
the institution where they are completing the postdoctoral program. This would
assist with decreasing Black males on the tenure track from entering the academy
at a disadvantage from their counterparts, specifically their white male
counterparts in the academy.

Limitations

While conducting this research study, three limitations surfaced. The first
limitation was participant selection. Due to the low number of tenured Black male faculty
at Research 1 institutions, there was a limited pool of possible participants for this
research study. Possible participants were contacted, and some responded immediately.
The researcher sent emails and direct messages on social media with possible
participants. Those that agreed to participate in the research study provided dates and
times to conduct the interview.

Scheduling interviews was a second limitation of the study. Some of the
participants had very busy schedules, which included conferences, research, teaching,
mentoring, and family responsibilities. In addition, the fall semester was closing in on
holiday breaks and final exams which created a time where participants’ schedules were
full for the semester. Different time zones also played a factor in the limitations.
However, conversations were had with each participant to schedule a time that was
mutually agreeable to both parties.

The third and final limitation was the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the United
States and other countries were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, three years
later, we are still recovering from the effects of COVID-19 and learning to maximize technology to its full potential. That included being forced into conducting interviews via video conference on the Zoom platform. All 13 of the interviews with participants were conducted using Zoom. Even though video conferencing was very useful for seeing the expressions of the participants, face-to-face interviewing was the best method. However, using Zoom for the video conference was a suitable alternative to interviewing participants in-person face-to-face.

**Future Research**

I believe that more research must be done in studying Black male faculty and, more specifically, Black male faculty on the tenure track. That includes using qualitative research to amplify the voices of the participants. While I believe that the semi-structured interviews used for this study were instrumental in helping explore the lives of the participants, I do concur that future research studies on this topic could be improved. My recommendations for future research are as follows:

1. Conduct studies with Black male faculty who did not earn tenure. This would provide a better understanding of the specific reason tenure was not obtained from their perspective.

2. Conduct studies with Black male faculty who left academia. This is important research because it would open a lens to why so many Black men choose to leave the academy.

3. Conduct studies with Black and Hispanic men to determine if they have similar experiences with earning tenure in the academy.
4. Conduct studies on Black male faculty who are currently on the tenure track preparing for their third-year review. This would provide great insight into the type of feedback that Black males on tenure track receive as they are going through the process of earning tenure and promotion.

5. Conduct studies with Black male faculty at Research 2 institutions, liberal arts colleges, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities to determine if there are similar experiences across institution types.

6. Conduct studies with Black male faculty who are associate professors on the path to earning a promotion to the rank of full professor.

For systemic change to occur, it will take more than the experiences of 13 tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions. However, the hope is that these findings will spark the conversation that fosters positive change in the tenure and promotion process for Black male faculty in the academy. Counter-storytelling must continue to be used to analyze the stories of Black male faculty as a tool to center their voices and to ensure that their stories are being told from their lived experiences.

Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of 13 tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions from across the United States. Each of these faculty members earned the rank of associate professor, and two have achieved the rank of full professor. One participant has gone on to become a College President at a Research 1 institution, and another participant serves a Dean of the College at a Research 1 institution, along with one participant is now serving as an Endowed Chair. Their narratives expressed
struggles, hopefulness, and successes that they experienced going through the tenure process at their perspective institutions. Since the numbers of tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions are still few, it is remarkable to see their individual achievements.

The research focusing on the tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions is still limited. Most of the information available focuses on the statistical data and not so much on the individual stories of tenured Black male faculty. However, the stories of these 13 men provide an in-depth view into some factors that played a role in their success in academia. The journey was easier for some participants than for others, but they all were able to achieve their goal of earning tenure and promotion. Some of the participants are diligently working toward the rank of full professor and other prestigious accomplishments in academia. These 13 Black men have demonstrated the true meaning of perseverance when faced with adversity in the academy.

This research study adds to the literature on the underrepresentation of Black male faculty and, more specifically, tenured Black male faculty at Research 1 institutions. This study is consistent with previous scholarship, indicating that the recruitment, retention and promotion problem still exists in the academy. However, previous studies highlighted the problem but did not offer concrete solutions that remedy the problem for Black male faculty who are the tenure track. This study specifically sought the advice of tenured Black male faculty to junior Black male faculty, which adds to the literature by offering solutions and valuable insight into the tenure process. The retention of Black male faculty must be a priority that is addressed by the administrators (i.e., Department Chairs, Deans, Provosts, and Presidents). For this problem to be rectified, a serious look must be taken
into the consistency of the tenure requirements across departments, colleges and universities. In addition, administrators need to seriously consider a mentorship program for individual junior faculty or a university-wide training program on the tenure and promotion process that will aid in the success of Black male faculty from the beginning until the end.
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APPENDIX A

IRB LETTER

OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DECLARATION of NOT RESEARCH

Quintavis Cureton
820 Main Street
Columbia, SC 29208

Re: Pro00123470

Dear Mr. Quintavis Cureton:

This is to certify that research study entitled WHEN THEY SEE US: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TENURED BLACK MALE FACULTY AT R1 INSTITUTIONS was reviewed on 9/1/2022 by the Office of Research Compliance, which is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB). The Office of Research Compliance, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board, has determined that the referenced research study is not subject to the Protection of Human Subject Regulations in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 et. seq.

No further oversight by the USC IRB is required. However, the investigator should inform the Office of Research Compliance prior to making any substantive changes in the research methods, as this may alter the status of the project and require another review.

If you have questions, contact Lisa M. Johnson at lisaj@mailbox.sc.edu or (803) 777-6670.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Johnson
ORC Associate Director and IRB Manager
Dear Future Participant,

My name is Quintavis Cureton. I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policies, Department at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Doctor of Philosophy, and I would like to invite you to participate. This study is sponsored by the Southern Regional Education Board.

I am studying the lived experiences of tenured Black male faculty during their tenure-track process at Research 1 institutions. This study will ask tenured Black male faculty to reflect on their tenure-track processes. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview about your experience on the tenure-track. You may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The meeting will take place via Zoom and should last about 60-90 minutes. The interview will be recorded via Zoom so that I can accurately transcribe what is discussed. The recordings will only be reviewed by the researcher and destroyed upon completion of the study.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of South Carolina. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed. So, please do not write your name or other identifying information on any of the study materials.

You will receive $25 dollar Amazon Gift Card for participating in the study.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at (803-944-0020 or curentoq@email.sc.edu) or my faculty advisor, (Dr. Spencer Platt, Splatt@mailbox.sc.edu). Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the email listed below to discuss participating.

With kind regards,

Quintavis Cureton 803-944-0020 curentoq@email.sc.edu

Quintavis Cureton 803-944-0020 curentoq@email.sc.edu
APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

RQ1: What are the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?

1. What was the tenure process at your university when you underwent it?
   a. What were the criteria for tenure and promotion?
      i. in research
      ii. in teaching
      iii. in service

2. How were the requirements or minimal standards for tenure and promotion provided to you and when? If not, why?
   a. Is it uniform across academic departments, schools, and colleges?
   b. How did your institution identify tenure and promotion committee members at that time?
   c. How did your institutions identify external reviewers?
   d. Who presented your tenure and promotion file? How was your tenure and promotion file presented?
      i. If someone presented your file, how were you a part of the process of selecting who presented your work?
   e. How many levels of review?
      i. Who reviewed at each level?
   f. How were votes counted / tallied? Was there a minimum number of votes or a minimum score/range required?

3. Please tell me about your experiences with the process.
   a. What stood out to you most?
   b. What, if anything, surprised you?

4. Is the tenure and promotion process the same now as it was when you completed it? If not, how is it different?
   a. in research?
   b. in teaching?
   c. in service?
   d. Do you perceive it to be more or less challenging now?

5. In what form were you notified about the votes on your tenure and promotion?
   a. email/letter?, conversation?, what form of documentation?
b. Was information provided regarding the details of the vote? for example, unanimous vote for tenure
c. Was information provided at each level of a vote?
6. How would you characterize the procedural elements of tenure and promotion? For example, transparent? fair? equitable? inclusive?
7. What would an unbiased tenure and promotion process look like?
   a. Would you describe your tenure and promotion process as unbiased?
8. How would you describe the role of politics in your tenure process?
9. Tell me about your interactions with other faculty members on your campus regarding tenure and promotion.
   a. How did you receive support from other faculty members in preparation for tenure? in the presentation of your file?
10. What issues, if any, did you confront as a Black male professor seeking tenure? post tenure?

**RQ2:** What role has mentorship played in the experiences of Black male professors at predominantly white Research 1 institutions as they pursued tenure?

11. What role did mentorship play in your pursuit of tenure, if any?
12. What sources of support did you identify upon entering academia? What sources of support remained important throughout preparation for tenure? Do you feel mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process?
13. Have you had opportunities to serve as a mentor? If so, to who? Why? Do you feel mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process? If so, why? If not, why?

**RQ3:** What recommendations would tenured Black male professors offer to aspiring Black male professors pursuing the professoriate on the tenure-track?

14. What advice would you offer to other Black males pursuing tenure at Research 1 institution?