5-2024

A Phenomenological Study on the Lived Experiences of Black Male Faculty at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Texas and Louisiana

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This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the College of Graduate and Professional Studies of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

Dena Counts, Ed.D.

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Dr. Nannette Glenn, Dean of
the College of Graduate and
Professional Studies

Date 3/21/24

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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Christopher Allen Frazier

May 2024

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family. You are and will forever be my inspiration. You have watched me persevere, and you have been there every step of the way. To my amazing wife, you are my world, and without you, I would not be the man that I am today. Because of you, my eyes have been opened to the beauty that this life provides. To my handsome children, Myles and Noah, I dedicate this to you in prayer that you may be led by your passion and purpose. Your daddy loves you to infinity. To future African American scholar-practitioners who will travel along this bridge that I have crossed, never look back, and when you move, so does the Lord. The God we serve has already paved a bridge for you. You just have to be willing to trust the journey. It leads you to Glory.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for allowing me to achieve such a milestone while never leaving me in times of uncertainty or challenges throughout this process. To my parents, thank you for life, and I hope I've made you proud. To the entire Frazier Family, Olshine Family, Greer Family, and my Fraternity Brothers thank you for all the love and support.

Thank you, Dr. Cranmore, my committee chair, for helping and believing in me from the first time we met. You showed me what it looks like to be a bridge builder for others coming along the way. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Mary Christopher, Dr. Lawrence Davenport, and Dr. McMichael, who provided me with great insight and direction throughout this journey.

Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to gain more clarity and insight into a distinctive phenomenon of the lived experiences of five African American male professionals in predominantly White institutions in Texas while seeking tenure and promotion. Using interviews throughout the duration of the study allowed the phenomenological inquiry to gain better insight from a personal lens while hoping to find the true essence of the phenomenon. All participants in this inquiry were African American male professionals who served in educational roles and had at least 3 years' experience serving in a predominantly White institution in Texas. This study has helped fill a gap in the literature and provide a voice for the underrepresented African American male professionals serving in predominantly White institutions while integrating critical race theory was used to debrief White power and discrimination entrenched in the U.S. educational system in examining the higher education system in America. Five major themes were discovered after several cycles of coding: (a) challenging experiences as a professional male of color at a predominantly White institution, (b) peers and tenure, (c) Whiteness, (d) racism, and (e) lack of male professionals of color. Additionally, several subthemes emerged from the data. These themes included (a) isolation, (b) bridgebuilding, (c) tools for success, (d) coping methods, and (e) relationships.

Keywords: African American males, higher education, tenure track, racism, male faculty of color, critical race theory, predominately white institutions

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The landscape of higher education has evolved over the years; however, there are still vast differences in hiring and retaining professional men of color (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). Before 1954, schools were segregated from *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, stating that they were separate but equal. In 1954, *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruled that segregation in schools was unconstitutional and unlawful (Fergus, 2017). According to Brown (2015), African Americans knew the cost of resisting segregation in the school system would mean risking their lives, homes, and communities. The crisis of fighting for fair education for people of color led to African Americans merging as a community to march against this injustice. African Americans knew their only hope of equality would be riding the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling (Brown, 2015).

As the ruling of *Brown vs. Board of Education* spread throughout the South, many African Americans understood there would still be a discrepancy within the system. The *Brown* decision led to White teachers and administrators working with diverse student populations. In contrast, teachers of color were granted less decision-making, less recognition, and fewer biases from their peers (Fergus, 2017). African Americans represented the power struggle advocating for justice while the ruling decision dismantled the oppression within American educational systems. While one aspect of oppression was addressed, another one came forth, known as colorblindness. The ideology of colorblindness leads one to misinterpret and disregard the marginalized realities of people of color while avoiding marginalized experiences (Fergus, 2017).

Background of the Problem

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2018, 1.5 million faculty members worked in degree-granting colleges (Snyder et al., 2018). The study's results reported that 40% were White men, whereas only 3% were Black men, Black women, and Hispanic men and women (Snyder et al., 2018). The researchers also broke down statistics into categories of academic rank, with Black men and women only accounting for 2% of full professors and 3% of associate professors (Snyder et al., 2018). This disparity in representation stems from various systemic issues and presents future issues on both macro and micro levels of education.

The statistics for Texas are similar to national statistics. Several prominent public institutions are considered predominately white institutions (PWIs) in Texas, and many of these large public institutions lack diversity among faculty. In 2019, Texas A&M reported 855 male professors, 202 female professors, 752 White-non-Hispanic professors, and 33 Black non-Hispanic professors (TAMU, 2019). In 2019, UT Austin reported that only 4.6% of full professors were Black non-Hispanic, whereas 77.6% were White non-Hispanic (The University of Texas, 2019). Lastly, in 2019, Texas Tech reported 313 male full-time professors and only 20 of those were Black men, while 685 were White-non-Hispanic men (TTU, 2019).

When a university is diverse in faculty and staff, the university can glean benefits. According to King et al. (2013), openness to diversity and challenge can be best facilitated when institutions encourage students to learn from and network with people who share different morals, identities, religions, and core beliefs. Educational training and workshops provide opportunities for cross-racial collaborations, self-confidence, and intellectual development (King et al., 2013). For example, the value placed on students' observations of their university's approach to diversity contributes to a student's engagement. Informal and formal networking

opportunities emphasize and are known to foster openness towards diversity (King et al., 2013). Faculty and staff of color can suffer in various ways due to a lack of emotional and professional representation (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Louis et al., 2016). Historically, universities have not taken the benefits of diversity seriously, which can negatively impact professional men of color concerning job satisfaction and advancement (Chung et al., 2018).

Positionality Statement

As a professional staff member who has worked with faculty at PWIs in Texas, I have familiarized myself with university trends, hiring practices, retention efforts, policies, and procedures. I experienced racial microaggressions and witnessed a lack of diversity efforts and retention efforts of Black male faculty. Throughout my years and experience in higher education, I built relationships with other professional Black male faculty members at PWIs. Their experiences are more challenging than those of their colleagues who are not persons of color. As these professional relationships grew, the depth of these conditions continued to surface. As a man of color, I shared the same experiences, and to ensure minimal bias, I chose this study to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of Black male faculty at PWIs in Texas.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it examined the lived experiences of Black male faculty at PWIs. It is essential to address the culturally sensitive phenomenon of Black male faculty working at PWIs based on the scarcity of Black male faculty members at PWIs and the factors contributing to the hiring and retention of Black male faculty. Understanding the history of education and advancement for people of color is important to understand why there is still a lack of Black male faculty at PWIs.

Organization of the Study

The first chapter of this study provided an introduction, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the study's limitations. Chapter 2 reviews the current literature on the history of racism in Higher Education, policy and retention practices, and the discrimination Black male faculty at PWIs experience in educational spaces. Chapter 3 discusses the methods used to conduct the study and to gather and analyze the data. This chapter describes and explains the study's research design. Chapter 4 provides the findings of the study. It displayed a detailed narrative description of the study for each participant and related themes of the interview questions. Last, Chapter 5 discusses the findings, the implications for future research and practice, and the researcher's conclusions.

Statement of the Problem

The lack of professional men of color at PWIs has severe implications for institutions and students for diversity, social justice, and representation in a collegiate setting (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). According to King et al. (2013), opportunities for students to embrace differences as possibilities for learning as bases of conflict are reduced when there is a lack of faculty of color. The lack of diversity is not a new issue; minority men often experience more negative social, economic, and emotional outcomes than their White counterparts (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). When a university lacks representation of professional men of color, it negatively affects men of color both professionally and emotionally (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). Black male experiences at PWIs result in job dissatisfaction, racial fatigue, microaggressions, invisibility, and racism (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). In comparison, in 2018, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that out of 1.5 million faculty, only 3% identified as Black men, whereas 40% were White men (Snyder et al., 2018). The sidelining

of Black male faculty has early outcomes that exclude advancement and tenancy for Black male faculty while stimulating stress and anxiety (Johnson et al., 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the lived experiences of Black male faculty at PWIs and their perceptions of their tenure track experiences.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do Black male faculty describe their lived experiences at selected Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?

RQ2: What do Black male faculty describe as the challenges associated with tenure and promotion at selected Predominantly White Institutions in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions are grounded in a theoretical framework, research design methods, and literature review.

Bracketing. When the researcher sets aside preconceived notions, experiences, and perceptions to attempt to dismiss any biases that would prevent the researcher from viewing the experience through the eyes of the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Essence. A term connected with phenomenological research that describes the nature and central meaning of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Faculty. The teaching and administrative staff and those members of the administration have academic rank in an educational institution (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Lived experience. A term “used in phenomenological studies to emphasize the importance of people's individual experiences as conscious human beings” (Creswell, 2007, p. 236).

Man of color/African American. A man whose ancestry is of African descent or who identifies as non-White (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Phenomenology. A term to describe "how one orients to lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990, p. 4).

Predominately White institutions. 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 (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

Purposive sampling. A term based on sampling is one in which information-rich cases are sought out to best address the research purpose and questions (Leavy, 2017, p. 79).

Structural description. A structural description delineates how the individuals experienced the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

Textual description. A textual description conveys what the individuals experienced with the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

Transition. An event or nonevent in one's life that changes one's “roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 10).

Triangulation. A collecting technique to study data on the same setting issue (Patton, 1999).

Limitations of the Study

The researcher defines Limitations as potential factors or issues with the study (Creswell, 2013). Several limitations were identified. First, the study includes self-reported data, which

allows the participants to offer the partial truth or have biased opinions. The second limitation is that the participants were from different PWIs in Texas, so their experiences may not be identical. Another limitation is that the study's author is a Black male faculty who has worked in higher education at PWIs. This experience could lead to bias from the researcher.

Summary

In conclusion, there are vast differences in the amount of Black male faculty across the nation, specifically within Texas. With the lack of men of color at PWIs, universities suffer from diversity, social justice issues, and a lack of representation in a collegiate setting (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). In conjunction with the lack of representation, minority men often experience more negative relational, financial, and emotional outcomes than their White counterparts (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). When a university lacks representation of professional men of color, it negatively affects men of color both professionally and emotionally, and this study examined the lived experiences of professional men of color at PWIs in Texas. The research questions asked how Black male faculty describe their lived experiences at selected PWIs in Texas and what Black male faculty describe as the challenges associated with tenure and promotion at selected PWIs in Texas. Chapter 2 discussed the literature surrounding the topics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study's framework is centered around the concept that microaggressions are directed at marginalized people (Harris & Linder, 2018). Previously, scholars have also linked critical race theory (CRT) as a guided tool to articulate marginalized people of color's experiences. Rather than using race theory, scholars can help educate others on the environment of people of color by studying race, discrimination, and societal issues (Mendez & Mendez, 2018). As stated by Harris and Linder (2018), CRT was used to debrief White power and discrimination entrenched in the U.S. educational system.

Racism and discrimination are ingrained in our society and throughout the nation, and critical race theorists dispute that it is supported and hidden in normalcy (Gillborn, 2015). CRT's need is to urge other critical race activists to apply intentional focus to dominant groups, first-hand experience of people of color, and resistance to change the differences in power and dominant groups (Gillborn, 2015). The work of Ledesma and Calderón (2015) stated that applying critical race theory in higher education is used to shed light on the ongoing policies and procedures that empower White privilege and Whiteness. Also noted in Ledesma and Calderón (2015), scholars have laid the foundation to cross-examine racial environments for people of color, admissions practices, and colorblindness. Whiteness can be a privileged and selective class that harvests benefits and protected traditions (Gillborn, 2015). To understand these rankings within the White class, CRT explains White supremacy as standard policies that structure the world in White people's interests (Gillborn, 2015). Some scholars have used CRT beyond the lens of racism. For example, intersectionality has been identified as a merger to address sexuality, language, gender, and other races intersect various identities (Capper, 2015).

Theoretical Framework Discussion

This study's framework is centered around the concept that microaggressions are directed at marginalized people (Harris & Linder, 2018). CRT applies when using an illustrative viewpoint. Previously, scholars have also linked CRT as a guided tool to articulate marginalized people of color's experiences. Rather than using race theory, scholars can help educate others on the environment of people of color by studying race, discrimination, and societal issues (Mendez & Mendez, 2018). As stated by Harris and Linder (2018), CRT was used to debrief White power and discrimination entrenched in the U.S. educational system.

Literature Review

Racism and discrimination are ingrained in our society and throughout the nation, and critical race theorists dispute that it is supported and hidden in normalcy (Gillborn, 2015). CRT's need is to urge other critical race activists to apply intentional focus to dominant groups, first-hand experience of people of color, and resistance to change the differences in power and dominant groups (Gillborn, 2015). The work of Ledesma and Calderón (2015) stated that applying critical race theory in higher education is used to shed light on the ongoing policies and procedures that empower White privilege and Whiteness. Also noted in Ledesma and Calderón (2015), scholars have laid the foundation to cross-examine racial environments for people of color, admissions practices, and colorblindness.

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intersectionality has been identified as a merger to address sexuality, language, gender, and other races intersect various identities (Capper, 2015).

Whiteness and Privilege in Higher Education

Higher education has diversified immensely over the last decade as students of color continue to change their demographics. The process of defining Whiteness is to comprehend what gives it power. The pitch addressed regarding whiteness is that it is foundational in our educational system, especially PWIs. According to Patton and Haynes (2020), Whiteness is the probing factor that allows, grants, and encourages systematic racism that solidifies White people into superior groups, mainly in academics. White privilege, white supremacy, and organizational practices continue to be a porch to White people's dominating attitudes and theories (Patton & Haynes, 2020).

The need for racial awareness has been a dire need for people of color, and in 1968, the "Kerner Commission Report" validated reasons to study racial attitudes (Earick, 2018). This report's emphasis clarified that White identity's psychology is investigated to gather a deeper understanding of organizational and traditional components of oppression that power White privilege (Earick, 2018). When attempting to dismantle Whiteness or White privilege, there is often resistance from White people who are systematically programmed to protect it. As a result, people of color have promoted racial justice, equality, and the chance to voice their interest in disassembling White privilege.

The reality is that people of color cannot and do not have the complete power to end the Whiteness of oppression, which is valid within the higher education system (Patton & Haynes, 2020). When approached about the logistics of White privilege, many Whites in higher education tend to withdraw with a sense of discomfort. To actively avoid or refuse to speak about

Whiteness in higher education is to participate in "racism without racists" (Patton & Haynes, 2020). Within the higher education system, acts of racism live throughout the classrooms, policies, and administration, although Whiteness is hyper-visible in higher education (Patton & Haynes, 2020).

Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Higher Education

One challenge that people of color face in higher education is to make the power Whiteness holds and how that impacts racial, emotional, and social discrepancies. Intersectionality has been linked to critical race theory by previous scholars. As stated, properly using intersectionality to assess higher education's motive in developing equitable societies recommends confronting inequities (Nichols & Stahl, 2019). The purpose of studying the intersectionality of race in higher education is to draw a lens of focus on how students and professors enter academic spaces with preconceived perceptions about one another, diverse settings, and teaching philosophies (Nichols & Stahl, 2019).

Intersectionality approaches a breakdown of Whiteness and White identities and ignores how gender and social class status have exhausting impacts on the experiences of people of color (Bhopal, 2020). Rather than producing the various outcomes of power struggles, intersectionality can be a streamlined model representing how race and gender align with individual experiences of oppression (Nichols & Stahl, 2019). White privilege and Whiteness remain dominant forces in the world of education, societal norms, and everyday experiences. According to the statistics, White men and women hold advantageous positions of power in higher education than people of color (Bhopal, 2020).

History of Racism in Higher Education

The history of racism consists of White Americans gaining their wealth and building educational systems, governmental policies, and societal norms on the backs of slavery. While African Americans struggle to get fair treatment, they face hatred, physical violence, and educational violence. As stated, higher education institutions operate through academic violence that is intentional, racial, and direct (Mustaffa, 2017). Even scholars in and outside the teaching realm have challenged universities' function and work as the racial machine to endorse White privilege (Mustaffa, 2017). Allowing White privilege to conquer higher education has raised many questions in connection to racism and institutions.

As illustrated in previous research, racism has been allowed to live in higher education. The universities' policies and procedures exemplified that White dynamics are reproduced sectors of power and rewarded through university implementations (Moore & Bell, 2017). Since White privilege has become a societal norm, it has been uncontested by other White people. Nevertheless, people of color have been accustomed to challenging Whiteness, White privilege, and racism. Research has shown that White privilege is an ideology of unrealistic cultural illustration that has molded a set of White ideas, sentiments, and nonracialized norms (Moore & Bell, 2017).

To create a clear illustration of a lived experience for a person of color, researchers have examined colorblindness in sync with racist policies to discover how it impacts their lives. Previous research found that institutions are opportunities for career advancement and social class progress (Moore & Bell, 2017). In challenging the racist practices at universities, the 1980s provided more challenges regarding how interactions with people of color were acceptable. With a surge in harassment cases, universities resorted to challenging their constitutional rights of

freedom of speech, which were in jeopardy (Moore & Bell, 2017). As time has progressed, there have been more openings within the field of higher education, coupled with the growing support of people of color to advocate for themselves within the workforce; however, there are still significant discrepancies in equality in the field of higher education (Moore & Bell, 2017).

Racial Statistics

The American Council of Education has been pivotal in showing the discrepancies with equality in higher education. According to Freeman et al. (2019), there are an estimated 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States. Of those schools, only 13% pinpoint diversity demographics in ethnic populations (Freeman et al., 2019). With little research conducted on the variety of leadership advancements for people of color, the growing demographics of inequality become more apparent throughout their careers (Freeman et al., 2019). As diverse student populations continue to evolve, professionals of color seek advancement in leadership opportunities. However, research indicated that faculty of color never get the chance due to White men holding senior-level positions (Killough et al., 2017).

As mentioned in the American Council of Education, White men were more prone to hold authoritative positions than White women, men of color, and women of color (Killough et al., 2017). The statistics provide clarity that Black students attend PWIs at 12%, and the discrepancies continue to show the underrepresentation of Black faculty at 5.4% (Killough et al., 2017). With hostile environments still existing in educational institutions, many colleges still use policies that demean people of color's literacy and lack retention (Killough et al., 2017). It can be further argued that professionals of color face disadvantages in their workspace, and the harsh realities for professionals of color are to grasp the out-of-touch reality that their White counterparts experience (Killough et al., 2017).

Knowing that professionals of color struggle to meet the curve when considered a priority, research has found that students desire a faculty body that resembles the student population (Freeman et al., 2019). The strategy to keep up with that trend has failed as White men continue to hold these authoritative positions after student bodies turn over (Freeman et al., 2019). The same White men holding these positions make decisions that factor in which students get accepted, which ones graduate, and who are successful after completing their program. The same students selected in this group are often considered the elite and create a power system through promotions of White privilege (Freeman et al., 2019). As stated in Freeman et al. (2019), an organization with a majority of White employees would mean far less opportunity for people of color. This is an important variable to consider for the health and growth of universities and supporting the student population (Freeman et al., 2019).

Senior Leadership and Diversity Issues

Black faculty have documented and expressed struggles within teaching in higher education, expressing leadership issues and diversity struggles (Hannon et al., 2019). Black faculty have voiced concerns regarding underrepresentation, bias, and a lack of preparation for tenure as significant issues and struggles they experience (Hannon et al., 2019). The underrepresentation can be traced back to the lack of pipeline development, creating equity and educational access for young Black males starting as far back as elementary school but ultimately lacking Black undergraduate men (Hannon et al., 2019). If undergraduate men are not graduating college and moving into a master's program, there was a lack of representation and candidates to interview in the hiring process. Unfortunately, researchers have found challenges in recruiting Black male faculty at universities and associate race-related concerns with PWIs

(Hannon et al., 2019). The reported documents from Black faculty have been consistent alongside prejudice, discrimination, and microaggressions (Hannon et al., 2019).

Black faculty are often met with emotional fatigue, unhealthy work-life balance, and workloads that their White counterparts are not asked to take on while working to secure tenure and lead students to success. The unjustified hatred directed toward people of color can create exhaustion, health concerns, and a lack of productivity (Hannon et al., 2019). These random acts that White people perform result from stress loads and intimidating environments for Black faculty. Black faculty members desire to stand in confidence, positively influence their students, and respect their associates. For this ideology to work, White people must address the elephant in the room and acknowledge that Black faculty are essential. While Black faculty have stated their concerns about their experiences on campus, addressing racism and stereotypes, the narrative still does not cater to Black faculty.

According to Hannon et al. (2019), Black faculty are more likely to deal with students' stereotypes and are less likely to be respected by their White colleagues. Students and faculty have the deciding power to affect whether faculty has a positive course evaluation. The importance of diversity leadership in educational institutions addressed how people of color are forced to learn two worlds: The White and Black worlds. It has been suggested that people of color are tokens in the educational system.

National University Practices

Each university may have different policies and procedures in their higher processes; however, research shows the continued lack of diversity of professional people of color in faculty roles. Depending on the institution type, most universities have detailed hiring practices overseen by human resources departments. The statistics from the National Center for Education

Statistics in 2018 stated that out of 1.5 million faculty, only 3% were Black men, Black women, and Hispanic men and women (Snyder et al., 2018). Federal laws have been put in place to protect individuals from discrimination in the hiring process. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces these laws, like Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1991 (EEOC, 2021). However, the numbers confirm a tremendous difference in gender and race within faculty at colleges in America (Snyder et al., 2018).

According to the Harvard Business Review, the approach to hiring has dramatically changed over the past 50 years, moving from human resources creating detailed job analysis and evaluation, posting ads for jobs, reference checks, IQ tests, and very intense interviews (Cappelli, 2019). This approach has often changed to outsourcing, recruiting, and applicant tracking systems (Cappelli, 2019). Another essential factor to consider is that many institutions and organizations do not promote from within, and retention of employees has become more challenging (Cappelli, 2019). Most universities have their own internal job boards; however, there is often a lack of turnover due to the tenure process creating an environment that faculty aim to achieve, thus not having as much turnover as other organizations.

With this knowledge of the lack of diversity in faculty members, the importance of hiring practices is called into question, as well as understanding the importance of the educational pipeline. To reach the academic level, one would need to become a faculty member, requiring men of color to graduate with an undergraduate degree, followed by a master's and a doctorate to meet the educational requirements.

Texas University Practices

Many PWIs in Texas are public institutions that receive funds from the state. If a school receives public funds from the state, it must adhere to the Texas Human Resources Code. The

Texas Commission on Human Rights Act "prohibits discrimination in employment, including hiring because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition), disability or age (40 years or older)" (THHS, 2021). This act outlaws employers from discrimination practices of regulating, segregating, or classifying prospective hires based on their protected status.

TCHR enables the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to examine employment discrimination complaints, investigate, and "file civil actions against public and private employers" in Texas (THHS, 2021). Another act that applies to hiring and employment at PWI in Texas is Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (THHS, 2021). This act established the law that no one in the United States of America would be excluded from participation, denied benefits or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. This would include private and public higher education institutions in Texas (THHS, 2021). Even though these laws and acts are in place to help prevent discrimination, there is still a significant disparity in hiring and retaining faculty of color at PWI in Texas.

With this dichotomy, many universities have worked to address the issue; however, universities cannot gain diverse candidates and try to fix this issue with diversity, and anti-discrimination practices are not making a dent in hiring diverse faculty. Liera (2020) noted that Whiteness is a substantial variable in how the university structure has been shaped in higher education in the United States, ultimately benefiting Whites as the majority within all aspects of higher education (Liera, 2020).

Barriers

Using CRT as a framework for looking at university retention of people of color, a variable of Whiteness is the component of colorblind racism, a "racial ideology that provides

people with the frame to interpret the root cause of race-related issues as anything but racism" (Liera, 2020, p. 1954). When colorblindness is utilized in university settings, a culture of niceness often develops that further normalizes race-neutral approaches to race. However, White serving institutions avoid discussing race, equity, equality, and White privilege because it makes people uncomfortable (Liera, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to understand this foundational concept when examining barriers for people of color in higher education.

Another major factor that contributes to the lack of diversity is the issue of implicit and explicit bias. Many universities have acknowledged this issue and put diversity training on recognizing, addressing, and correcting discrimination in their hiring and interviewing practices (Newman et al., 2015; O'Meara et al., 2020). O'Meara et al. (2020) discussed the lack of hiring underrepresented minorities in faculty roles due to a lack of diversification with specific types of institutions and fields, like STEM. Previous research has noted the impact of racial bias when examining the concept of hiring ability, suggesting that university bias is used as gatekeeping, reinforcing the lack of access to faculty jobs in higher education (O'Meara et al., 2020). The culture of niceness and implicit bias continue to add to the colorblind hiring practices and keep the status quo of a racialized structure of keeping Whites hired over faculty of color (Liera, 2020; O'Meara et al., 2020). Because of this implicit bias and systematic racism, many professionals of color in higher education face consistent microaggressions, which can impact their whole being (Louis et al., 2016).

Microaggressions

Many professionals of color in higher education are subject to various forms of racism within the workplace. Some are blatant and overt, while others can be more subtle and vary from verbal, nonverbal, or microinsults (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Louis et al., 2016).

Microaggressions are often more subtle forms of racism and discrimination: automatic verbal or nonverbal attacks on people of color. They are assaulted on the intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexuality, and language (Louis et al., 2016). The racial inequities within PWI create an environment in which faculty of color are at risk for higher racial oppression rates, both direct and subtle, within higher education (Louis et al., 2016). Racially motivated actions and ideologies are referred to as "micro" because they take a less loud form. However, just because these actions and beliefs are silenced, it does make an enormous impact on people of color who are the recipients of these aggressions on both a mental and emotional level (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020).

Racial microaggression in higher education can be a part of everyday life for faculty of color (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). White students often perpetuate racial microaggressions, and staff, faculty, and administration are at times unaware of the racist origins of their behaviors yet promote Whiteness and White supremacy (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). The research by DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2020) resulted in people of color in higher education expressing feelings of being treated as second class, assuming being at a lower status within the university and assuming criminal status. Results from Louis et al. (2016) also confirmed the frequency of micro insults and aggressions that faculty of color experienced, as well as increased stress, struggle to approach aggressors, and sense of resiliency. Other significant impacts of microaggression on faculty of color are a decreased sense of belonging, feelings of being devalued or ignored, lower job satisfaction, and adverse effects on their mental well-being (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Louis et al., 2016; Young et al., 2015). Racial microaggressions are often part of campus culture, and faculty of color have various ways of handling these oppressive aggressions.

Further research points to studies conducted on race and African American faculty can be found in PWIs; however, there is a shortage of literature on the negative experiences of African Americans in other capacities, such as faculty and administrators (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). When looking at national research on microaggressions, it can be anticipated that HBCUs do not have racialized spaces due to the large population of Black students and the more significant presence of African American administrators and faculty (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). HBCUs deal with similar experiences, such as internalized oppression, tokenism, and isolation (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). Research has suggested that on a larger scale, higher education has been widespread with racism and microaggressions at the administrative level.

Coping Mechanisms for People of Color

Even though microaggressions tend to be hierarchical within the higher education system, faculty of color continue to find ways to cope with racism within their work environments. One significant outcome of microaggression is being devalued and lacking belonging (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Louis et al., 2016; Young et al., 2015). Results have shown various methods of coping skills that faculty of color enact to deal with racial microaggressions. One coping mechanism is a sense of futility, which prompts the faculty of color to disengage, ignoring microaggression (Louis et al., 2016). This coping mechanism of futility is often utilized because faculty of color have learned there are limited ways to deal with racism and microaggressions without facing more stressors and potentially jeopardizing their career (Louis et al., 2016). When faculty members experience racial microaggressions, many report feelings of stress, isolation, and devaluation but often feel that their attempts to deal with the aggressor was in vain (Louis et al., 2016). Many faculty members report inner conflict over confronting their aggressors, questioning if there would be any change, or believing there would be no positive response or

change from the aggressor (Louis et al., 2016). The sense of futility is also influenced by the lack of support within the environment and the feeling that they did support their peers or superiors (Louis et al., 2016).

Whether working for a PWI or an HBCU, negative experiences such as microaggressions drastically affect both psychological and physiological well-being (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). While experiencing microaggressions, African Americans must find ways to respond without being labeled as having aggressive behavior. It can be assumed that African American professionals do not experience discrimination at HBCUs due to the large population of African American students. According to DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2020), staff at HBCUs have experienced racism and aggressive environments and found their intellect to be doubted. During this survival stage, mental and emotional fatigue occurs in response to stress factors. As African Americans learn to adopt coping strategies, studies indicate that the most common approaches are adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). According to DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2020), adaptive strategies are considered beneficial and healthy approaches to eliminating stress.

In contrast, maladaptive strategies are deemed to be disengaging and harmful approaches that increase stress levels. Applying adaptive coping strategies has been found to assist with dealing with stress and handling stressful events that cater to seeking mentorship and problem-solving (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). For example, those individuals who employ healthy coping mechanisms find ways to network with other professionals, engage in self-help, rely on religion, and set healthy boundaries.

Using maladaptive coping strategies can be considered as freeing from the conflict and is studied to be unhealthy (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). For example, an African American who

adopts maladaptive coping strategies usually tries to flee from their emotional, mental, and physical stressors. Condensing these emotions often results in bottled-up emotions, withdrawal from societal activities, and increased levels of self-criticism (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). African Americans have been under the most discrimination when working in higher education. Each individual of color has a unique way of relying on coping mechanisms. These factors can be determined by the number of personal networks an individual has access to (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020).

Conversely, the results of one study show that another coping mechanism confronts racism with available communication methods (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). Participants in the study spoke about how they often kept quiet in the past but found that they could confront racism by opening up a dialogue channel, which ultimately helped reduce their stress (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). Many African American professionals found it convenient to have support groups that helped them navigate comparable experiences (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020).

Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

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Mentoring

The reality for people of color in higher education is that their White colleagues are not faced with race, stereotypes, or scholars challenging their intelligence. The false narrative about Black professors being intellectually incompetent at PWIs still exists, and students often question their credibility (Allison, 2008). Black professors are expected to publish numerous times yearly, most recognized by White researchers (Allison, 2008). It becomes problematic when Black

professors are silenced when addressing the isolation. However, Black faculty are still being called to cater to students' success, while university policy does not tackle the everyday experiences of people of color.

Black faculty have mentioned that their work should be compensated since they are tasked with hefty work, which slows down their advancement and tenure (Allison, 2008). In contrast, White faculty differ in their desires in the tenancy process. According to Allison (2008), Black faculty are enthusiastic to begin working towards tenure, but tenured faculty fail to assist Black faculty in adapting, learning, and incorporating the institution's policies. The significance of being taught how to navigate a new culture and tradition is essential for adaptability. Scholars have documented the importance, benefits, and development of professionals with mentoring.

Mentoring is a relationship that harvests safe spaces for questions and allows a person to experience personal development (Mazerolle et al., 2018). Mentors help guide new colleagues to settle into their roles and nourish career and emotional support during the learning curve (Mazerolle et al., 2018). Many Black faculty members cannot fend for and adapt to the new organizational traditions without mentorship. Mentorship should not rely on a single person; an organization should take on this role. Depending on the position, multiple parties should be referenced as mentors. A diverse pool of mentors offers different perspectives of leadership, experiences, and career practices that have been beneficial to their success.

Organizational mentors have been well-known as primary sources for newcomers and assisting their navigation. These relationships are not forced but somewhat intentional and purposeful (Mazerolle et al., 2018). It has been documented that White counterparts see Black faculty as incompetent and often challenged by White students. Since mentorship is grown naturally, faculty of color are faced with a deficit due to the damaged relationship with their

White peers. Also stated by Mazerolle et al. (2018), faculty members must be present to fulfill the incoming faculty's desire for mentorship. With a small percentage of the Black faculty present at PWIs, Black faculty are the least prepared, mentored, and thought of for promotion (Mazerolle et al., 2018). The data are crucial for understanding the importance of representation within PWIs in Texas and looking at the changing demographics within the state.

The Changing Demographics in Texas

Over the last 20 years, Texas's demographics have changed, moving Texas into a majority-minority state (Fletcher & Klepfer, 2019). The movement has come from a growth in the Hispanic population, projected to be 60% of 18-24-year-olds by 2050 (Fletcher & Klepfer, 2019). With the increase in minority populations, research projections point to the fact that 54% of the jobs in Texas required postsecondary education by 2020, which required more education at a higher level (Fletcher & Klepfer, 2019).

Fletcher and Klepfer (2019) also reported the growing delays in attending a postsecondary institution after high school, which could be influenced by poverty within Texas's various regions. Even though positive options like gaining real-world work experience, there could be more negative outcomes and decreasing postsecondary attendance (Fletcher & Klepfer, 2019). Texas fell in fifth place nationally for graduation rates in 2015–2016, with 93% White, 85% African American, and 87% Hispanic (Fletcher & Klepfer, 2019). The study shows that about half of Texas high school graduates enroll in college directly after high school, and of that, half, 59%, are White and 48% are Hispanic (Fletcher & Klepfer, 2019). Another study shows that Texas college graduations are rising; however, they take longer to complete (Fletcher & Klepfer, 2019). According to Fletcher and Klepfer (2019), the number of first-generation students has declined since 2012, and if they attend, they attend public 2-year colleges. To help

close gap areas, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) created a new 15-year initiative to help increase postsecondary education and degrees (Fletcher & Klepfer, 2019).

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board studies and reports trends and enrollment expectations every 2 years (THECB, 2020). The THECB launched the 60x30TX plan in 2015 with four primary goals; the first is that at least 60% of Texans aged 25-34 had a degree or certificate by 2030 (THECB, 2020). The second goal is to increase completion for 4-year colleges by 54% by 2025 and 60% by 2030 for 2-year colleges (THECB, 2020). The third and fourth goals focus on increasing marketable skills and not exceeding student debt by 60% (THECB, 2020). The current plan is making moderate progress, and as the demographics change within higher education, it is vital to understand the importance of student representation.

Impact of Representation

The changing demographics of college students in Texas are noticeable, and the state has taken severe measures and initiatives to help increase the completion rate of graduates (THECB, 2020). While these initiatives are essential, it would also be beneficial to understand the connection and impact of representation within PWIs in Texas. Fletcher and Klepfer (2019) reported that 85% of Texas high school graduates are African American, and out of those high school graduates, many are not pursuing or finishing a 2-year or 4-year degree. Many students of color at PWI feel underrepresented, which can be a factor in students not persisting to graduation (Moore et al., 2020). As the demographics of student populations reflect growth in diversity, so should the representation. Understanding the connection between inequality in education and the underrepresentation of people of color would allow one to grasp the dire need for change. According to Moore et al. (2020), African American students lacked support and found it challenging to connect with a mentor. To build the pipeline for Black doctoral students (Moore et

al., 2020), good mentorship should be applied earlier in a student's educational journey, increasing the pursuit of advanced education. The various contributions that Black faculty make to an institution reflect their character and passion for teaching, but they still struggle to achieve equal representation within their PWIs (Moore et al., 2020).

Many aspiring Black scholars pursue success in graduate-level education due to people of color's inequality in the United States. Senior Black faculty are prime examples of success for students of color to see (Moore et al., 2020). Career choices do not always come easy, but having positive perceptions and things planted gives one a chance to dream the imaginable. Black faculty can begin influencing students early by encouraging their involvement in life and career paths for African American youth (Moore et al., 2020). Additionally, Moore et al. (2020) found that Black faculty should intentionally be placed in colleges throughout the United States to increase the pool of Black graduate students.

Summary

In conclusion, critical race theory is the theory used to examine the issues of White power, discrimination, and racism that are woven throughout America and the U.S. educational system (Harris & Linder, 2018). The literature on CRT theorizes that racism and White privilege have contributed to universities' policies and procedures on hiring and is accepted as a social norm that college faculty is a White male-dominated field (Moore & Bell, 2017). A small percentage of Black male faculty experience higher levels of stress, discrimination, microaggressions, and career advancement challenges (Allison, 2008; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). The state of Texas has been changing in demographics of students entering college and are no longer primarily White students, thus creating the need for more faculty of color to be represented within PWIs and understanding the challenges Black

male faculty experience at PWIs in Texas. Chapter 3 discussed the methodology and data collection for this research study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Chapter 3 contains a review of the purpose of this study, which is a lack of male faculty of color at PWIs. The chapter includes a review of phenomenology in which the phenomenologist compiles a list of shared familiarities to conduct his assumptions about an individual's lived experiences of isolation, discrimination, racism, hostile work environments, and discrepancies in representation. The responsibility of the phenomenologist in this study is to observe the lived experience of the phenomenon.

Research Design and Method

This study was a qualitative phenomenological study that aimed to focus on the lived experiences of individuals following a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). I asked the following questions:

RQ1: How do Black male faculty describe their lived experiences at selected Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?

RQ2: What do Black male faculty describe as the challenges associated with tenure and promotion at selected Predominantly White Institutions in Texas, Louisana, Georgia, Florda, and Oklahoma?

Meaning is the essence of transcendental phenomenology of science, a strategy for obtaining and accumulating data that expounds the cores of human experience. As stated in Moustakas (1994), qualitative research focuses on the entirety of experience and a search for similarity in experiences, viewing experience and behavior as a collaborative relationship. The implications of transcendental phenomenology ignite a phenomenological study that prepares the researcher to apply a methodical approach to analyzing data. Placing prejudgments aside can be called "epoche," a Greek reference that avoids judgment. The transcendental process allows the

researcher to see the phenomenon " for the first time" and open to its totality (Moustakas, 1994). This transcendental phenomenological inquiry aims to examine the lived experiences of professional men of color at PWIs in Texas. Chapter 3 discusses transcendental phenomenology and a thorough report of the procedures.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that studies and documents the "lived experiences" of people who experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The research design was made well known by the phenomenological philosophy writings of German mathematician Edmund Husserl in 1913 (Creswell, 1998). Husserl (1931) believed that phenomenology inquiry lets the researcher enter into or revisit the world as it is lived and experienced by the participants to gain the absolute essence of the experiences.

In conducting a phenomenal study, the phenomenon experienced by the participants is crucial for the researcher to understand on a real subjective level (Moustakas, 1994). To understand and describe the individual's experiences, the researcher must deeply understand the individual's consciousness by becoming the individual (Schutz, 1967). The goal of phenomenology inquiry is to find the essence of the experience by understanding human thought and unbiased research (Dowling, 2007; Zalta, 2003). Patton (1990) showed another clear outline of the aim of phenomenological inquiry:

> The assumption is that there is an essence or essence to shared experience. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. Different people's experiences are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to the identity of the phenomenon's essence, for example, the essence of loneliness, the essence of being a mother, and the essence of being a participant in a particular program. The

> assumption of essence, like the ethnographer's assumption that culture exists and is essential, becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study. (p. 70)

Van Manen (1990, p. 29) stated that the inquiry of phenomenology requires the phenomenologist to become a "sensitive observer of the subtleties of everyday life and an avid reader to the relevant tests in the humanities, history philosophy, anthropology and the social sciences as they pertain to her domain of interest." Laverty (2003) stated that phenomenology is “illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within the experience that may be taken for granted in our lives” (p. 24). This phenomenological inquiry seeks to illuminate the lived experiences of professional male faculty of color at PWI in Texas through transcendental phenomenological inquiry.

Transcendental Phenomenology

This study used transcendental phenomenology, requiring the researcher to transcend his biases or assumptions on the issue to see the phenomenon"...freshly, as for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 200). The inquiry of transcendental phenomenology comes from Husserl's work and how he would interchangeably use transcendental and phenomenology to showcase the reduction in explaining the phenomena (Van Manen, 1990). Transcendental phenomenological research has four steps: epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and a synthesis of meaning and essence, as described by Moustakas (1994).

The first step of the transcendental phenomenological inquiry is the epoché, which Moustakas (1994) described as "a practice that involves the full existential engagement of the researcher as a whole person” (p. 230). In this stage, the researcher grows in awareness of and details the state of their experience (Moustakas, 1994). This first step can be challenging due to the impact on one's emotions and ideas being challenged to eliminate prior assessments or

judgments (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenologist must clear out all judgments, work to readjust their assumptions, and focus on examining the participant's journeys and lived experiences (Wertz, 2005). As the phenomenologist, I must differentiate between my experiences and knowledge as a man of color and focus to enter the participants' world.

The second step is phenomenological reduction, also called bracketing, in which the "researcher must bracket out as much as possible their own experiences" to fully encompass and detail the participant's view of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). According to Moustakas (1994), the problematic aspect of bracketing mandates the phenomenologist to:

> Describe in the textural language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also the internal act of consciousness, the rhythm, and the relationship between the phenomenon and self. The task requires that I look at and describe. (p. 90)

One aspect of bracketing is the horizontalization process, which requires the researcher to stay open-minded while avoiding biases so that the researcher can look equally at each experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) recommended examining each statement in the phenomenological inquiry by elimination or reduction, and this can be accomplished by asking two questions:

1. Do the statements show information related to the individual's experience that grows one's understanding of the phenomenon?
2. Should the statement be labeled or classified in terms of being crucial to the growth of understanding the phenomenon?

The third step is imaginative variation, in which the researcher studies the information collected through various perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas(1994) explained imaginative variation as seeking:

> possible meaning through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals' and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced, in other words, the "how" speaks to conditions that illuminate the "what of experience." (p. 85)

This step is essential to help break down features and research various possible meanings so one can "arrive at structural descriptions of an experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). This step helped grow in depth of male faculty of color at PWI in Texas and their experiences so that the phenomenon can be seen from various viewpoints. The last step requires the researcher to synthesize meaning and essence by integrating textual and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl (1970) explained:

> I can take no empirical determination as actually belonging to the object; I can only say that it is experienced under this determination. Even in thought, I cannot hold fast to the determination in an identical way; I can never, in approaching the experienced object, say that the determination I experience now is absolutely the same as the one I have experienced. (p. 314)

Population

The study consisted of male faculty of color who have worked or are currently working at PWIs in Texas. To complete a phenomenological inquiry, each participant must have lived through the phenomenon of the study (Moustakas, 1994). Based on this fact, the study's population consisted of the following inclusion criteria: (a) Those who identify as male; (b) African American or Black; (c) are classified as a faculty member as a lecturer,

assistant/associate, or tenured professor; and (d) work or worked at a PWI in the state of Texas. This included both public and private institutions in Texas, and the participants were selected using a purposive selection method.

Study Sample

According to Starks and Trinidad (2007), the sample size of a phenomenological study should range from one to 10 people. The population was gained by using purposive sampling and, if needed, snowball sampling, where participants recommend or suggest other participants (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling centers on the foundation that pursuing the best circumstances for the study makes the best data (Patton, 2015). I invited 15 people to participate in the study and interviewed a minimum of six participants.

Materials/Instruments

Each individual received an invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B) before collecting data. Each participant participated in three semistructured interviews.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Creswell (2013) pointed out that the phenomenologist analyzes data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combining them into themes. Provisions for trustworthiness were taken by using triangulation (Creswell, 2013). Trustworthiness is also better known as credibility or validity (Leavy, 2017). The process of building trust arises through the quality of the research data collected to address the research purpose and the appropriate use of the research conclusions (Leavy, 2017). Triangulation was done by interviewing several participants to gain more depth and dimension of the data and phenomenon (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). Each individual participated in three interviews (see Appendix C). Since each interviewee

participated in multiple interviews, triangulation was used to strategically collect data to address the same questions (Leavy, 2017). Meanwhile, data triangulation is essential in examining a theory or assertion (Leavy, 2017). The purpose of having three interviews aligns with data triangulation to lure meaning from the data collected and place it into a framework for further comprehension (Leavy, 2017). Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form before collecting data (see Appendix B).

Semistructured interviews were collected and further analyzed using data from Zoom interviews. I used transcendental phenomenology procedures and guidelines to collect and analyze phenomenological data (Moustakas, 1994). Once the data were collected and analyzed, they were transcribed and coded for themes and results (Creswell, 2013). The first set of interviews was on a Zoom meeting to get better acquainted and create a relationship with each participant (see Appendix C). The second set of interviews was conducted using open-ended questions, and the questions were structured to get better acquainted with the phenomenon of the individual's experience. Finally, the third interview answered any unanswered questions or uncertainty from participants' previous interviews and fact-checked data from the last two interviews. To better understand the role of a phenomenologist, studying and examining their work assisted me as a co-inquirer and data collector. As Creswell (2013) stated, all interviews must be documented and checked for mistakes.

Each interview was completed using Zoom and recorded in the Zoom software (see Appendix C). The interviews were transcribed using transcriptionpuppy.com. All notes that were recorded were double-checked for accuracy and errors. After each interview had been documented and transcribed, member checking was completed, where each participant received a copy of the transcript to review for any feedback or additional inputs.

Creswell (2013) stated that coding is the core of qualitative data analysis. The data needed to be condensed, and this was done using In Vivo Coding, which is "grounded in the participant's perspective" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017, p. 274). In Vivo Coding, the participant's dialect represents the interviewee's qualitative analysis and verbatim language (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). In Vivo Coding reviews the interviewee's language from the transcript, and the researcher hones in on phrases or words that stand out (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). Interview transcripts and participant recordings were used to find words that stand out or have meaning and can be "italicized, bolded, underlined, or highlighted" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017, p. 121). In formatting the participants' responses, the In vivo codes were in quotation marks to remember their beginning and put into stanzas (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). I gained themes from analytic categories and found reoccurring patterns from codes (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). The themes were placed in outline form, starting with the most important (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). I utilized member-checking practices to allow the participants to read the transcript, the final results section, and the final report to give feedback and allow for more credibility (Creswell, 2013). The study changed names and identifying information to help protect the participants' identities (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

An IRB was submitted, and I contacted potential participants after approval. Due to a lack of responses, the research sought IRB to expand the study, which was approved. An invitation letter was sent to each prospective participant that meets the selection process (see Appendix A). The sample size for phenomenological research varies from one to 10 participants (Giorgi, 2009). The recommended number of participants for the phenomenological study is a minimum of three (Giorgi, 2009). The participants for this study met the following criteria: (a)

African American, (b) 3 years of working at a public White institution, (c) male, and (d) 3 years working in Texas at a public White institution. All participants were over the age of 18 and were provided with informed consent, documenting the study and any risks to the participants. With the best practices in place, there is still the possibility of a data breach (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). To ensure that information is always handled with care, the documents were stored on a password-locked document on a password-locked computer. This step can be achieved by permanently closing and locking the designated computer after use.

Assumptions

Assumptions of the study consist of the following:

1. Male faculty of color at PWIs in Texas were the minority among faculty members.
2. Male faculty of color at PWIs report feelings of isolation and challenges in establishing their professional identities.
3. The results of the data analysis showed similar racial struggles, as supported by the literature review.

Male faculty of color at PWIs in Texas find coping methods and support from other people of color in higher education or their families.

Limitations

Creswell (2013) defined limitations as "potential weaknesses or problems with the study defined by the researcher" (p. 199). The following are the limitations of the study:

1. The research is limited by only studying the experiences of male faculty of color at PWI.
2. The data collection was through the interviews of the participants, having to trust their honesty.
3. The location of only using PWIs in Texas is a small sample size.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to aspects that the phenomenologist did not include in the study and the study's boundaries (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The following delimitations are included in the study:

1. Participants were only male faculty members of color who identify as Black or African American.
2. Participants were currently or previously employed at PWIs in Texas.
3. Participants were faculty members as instructors, assistants, associates, or full-tenured professors.

Summary

Chapter 3 reviewed the study's methodology, which used phenomenological inquiry and inquiry methods to conduct this study. Transcendental phenomenology was the design used in this study, which grants a phenomenologist to give an accurate account of the lived experiences of professional men of color at PWIs. The study's limitations include only studying Black male faculty in Texas who work at PWIs. and open to its totality (Moustakas, 1994). This transcendental phenomenological inquiry aims to examine the lived experiences of professional men of color at PWIs in Texas. Chapter 3 discusses transcendental phenomenology and a thorough report of the procedures. The next chapter will discuss the findings and results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 contains a review of the purpose of this study, which is to describe the lived experiences of Black male faculty at PWIs and their perceptions of their tenure track experiences. The chapter includes a review of findings and results, which was condensed by In Vivo coding. As a phenomenologist, I honed in on phrases or words that stand out. Multiple pass-throughs of the data helped isolate themes and categories to present the final results.

Due to a lack of responses, the study was opened to a broader population. The study was expanded to Louisiana. Throughout searching for participants, several mentioned that they feared the loss of their jobs or retaliation. With the expansion of the study, a flyer was created and shared on different social media platforms. The platforms included Facebook (i.e., Black Male Professionals Group, Black Higher Education Professional, and Black Educators), LinkedIn, and Instagram. Additionally, the flyer was sent to 100 more potential candidates.

Co-Inquirers Profiles

The co-inquirers were all African American men with at least 3 years of teaching while seeking tenure at PWIs in Texas and Louisiana. The co-inquirers each participated in three semistructured interviews. All participants resided in Texas and Louisiana during the time of the study. The schools and roles in which they served were in Texas and Louisiana. Each participant met the requirements to partake in this study.

The phenomenologist appointed pseudonyms to protect the identities and guarantee the confidentiality of participants and universities in this study (Creswell, 2007). Additional identifying information, like names of universities and current positions, was also removed. Most of the experiences spoken about were personal and highly sensitive, so confidentiality was an

obligation. The appointed pseudonyms used to protect the participants were used again in reporting data (Creswell, 2007).

All participants read and understood the consent form before signing to participate in the research study. Each semistructured interview was conducted using Zoom in a quiet, protected space to prevent interruptions and disturbances. Each interview was audio recorded and later transcribed by transcriptionpuppy.com. The interviews ranged from 25 minutes to 40 minutes. Transcripts were produced and sent to participants to check for accuracy. All interviews were printed for in-depth analysis.

The phenomenologist finalized the coding and data analysis using a manual coding process. Color coding was created and used on each interview transcript to assist with categorizing emerging themes. Themes and categories underwent pass-throughs to reach the best results for the final themes.

Co-Inquirer 1

An African American single male born in California and raised in New York. All of his K-12 experiences were in New York, and he later moved to the Carolinas for his undergraduate degree. He attended a small private HBCU. His graduate experience led him to Washington, DC, and he has worked in higher education for 16 years as a student affairs professional. He now serves as an assistant professor and resides in Texas.

Co-Inquirer 2

A third-generation African American male native of Detroit. He is married with four children. His K-12 experience was in Detroit public schools. He went through undergraduate school at Kentucky State, an HBCU. He has served in various roles throughout his educational

journey. He was a teacher during his first 2 years in education before becoming a principal. He now serves as an associate professor and resides in Texas.

Co-Inquirer 3

An African American single male from a suburban type of town in Illinois. Different from the other participants, his K-12 experience was unique. He attended Title IX schools in elementary, which are low-income schools and predominantly Black students. He later attended public schools for his middle and high school experience. He completed 2 years of his undergraduate journey at Southern Illinois University and finished his last 2 years at Morehouse. He has served as a higher education professional, and his current role is assistant director.

Co-Inquirer 4

An African American male who grew up in the inner city of Philadelphia. After graduating high school, he served in the Air Force for 11 years. He rededicated his life to Christ and later graduated from theological seminary. He taught for 15 years and returned to complete his doctorate, and he has been working in education for the last 35 years.

Co-Inquirer 5

An African American single male who grew up in Bossier, Louisiana. He has 11 years of corporate experience before transitioning into higher education. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Louisiana. He has served in higher education since 2016 and is currently serving as a director.

Table 1

A Table Showing Length of Each Interview

Participants	Interview #1	Interview #2	Interview #3	Total interview minutes
Co-inquirer 1	28.03 Min	75.68 Min	37 Min	465.94
Co-inquirer 2	25.22 Min	32.44 Min	15.58 Min	
Co-inquirer 3	19.5 Min (Both Interviews 1 & 2)		13.31 Min	
Co-inquirer 4	78.54 Min (Both Interviews 1 & 2)		22.01 Min	
Co-inquirer 5	98.26 Min (Both Interviews 1 & 2)		20.37 Min	

Step 1. Epoché

Epoché is a Greek term used by Husserl, meaning to withdraw or refrain from judgments or preconceptions about the phenomena under review (Moustakas, 1994). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) mentioned that researchers approach the phenomenon of the study as if one has no familiarity. Phenomenologist should put aside their preconceived notions and familiarities with the phenomenon in brackets before proceeding with data collection (Moustakas, 1994). During the process of epoché, I placed my biases aside, prejudices, and presuppositions in order to look at the phenomenon of a lack of professional African American men at PWIs in the states of Texas and Louisiana with a clear and unbiased assessment (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenologists need to know that epoché does not deny certainty or familiarity (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) explained: "Epoché is placed in brackets or 'ordinary thoughts' to present produce 'a phenomenon to gazed upon…freshly through a purified consciousness'" (p. 85). Creswell (1998) added that "descriptive researcher bias from the outset of a study is verification technique. In this

clarification, the researcher notes past experiences, biases, and prejudices that may influence the study" (p. 202).

Personal Reflection

Looking back on my experiences in higher education, I often think about the lack of Black male professionals. My first role in higher education was as a recruiter for a private, faith-based university. I traveled across the states, visiting high schools and community colleges recruiting students to attend our university. During my time traveling, I visited various professionals from other universities. After many years of traveling and attending community college recruiting fairs, I observed that the other universities in attendance lacked Black male professionals. The spaces where I had the opportunity to work alongside higher education reps provided me with direct insight into what representation looked like for African American male professionals. Reflecting on my K-12 and collegiate experiences, I see they lacked Black male professionals. This absence of Black male professionals, specifically faculty, was evident in my college experience as I only had two Black male faculty members.

The impact of mentorship for Black males is critical for building up tremendous professionals in the field of education. Born and raised in Texas, my educational experiences regarding African American males are unique. Mentorship for me came from African American male coaches in sports, and that number later declined after attending a PWI for athletics. As I began to take my educational journey seriously, I found myself looking for African American male mentorship for various needs. Being a first-generation college student, I had yet to learn what I was up against. My first few semesters were challenging while trying to adjust to uncharted territory.

To assist or serve along with the shortage of Black male professionals, I took it upon myself to mentor all students, but more so African American male students. It came naturally to me in many cases. It reminded me of when I first got to college. I looked around, and most men did not resemble my ethnic background. I needed advice and direction from men who understood my journey as a Black male seeking to further my education and career. It is easier to relate to someone who understands your story and what it may take to change and help with the trajectory of success in life. As a mentor, I sought to show students authentic mentorship by showing myself through my work, establishing rapport with them, and encouraging them to stand firm in their beliefs of who they are. While doing so, I also encouraged students not to be afraid to be themselves while seeking guidance about life from mentors. I also knew that to succeed, I needed to have an unwavering mindset about the task while striving to become a scholar and a great leader.

As I promoted authentic mentorship with these students, I began to think about who I was as a person, leader, and mentor. Just like I felt isolated and lacked guidance during my educational journey, I thought about the young Black men that I was mentoring and what they could need from me. The first thing that potentially helped these young men succeed was my presence alone, which reassured them by knowing they identified with someone of their ethnicity. Secondly, just encouraging them by speaking positive affirmations encourages them to start believing and thinking positively about their life. Within a short time, my education career advanced extremely fast. I now serve as an assistant principal at a high school in Texas, and yet again, I am walking in uncharted territory. Again, I am reflecting on who I am as a person, leader, and mentor. As an educator, I make it a personal mission to ensure students that everything they desire in life can be achieved with the addition of education.

Once the interview process for this transcendental phenomenological inquiry started and the co-inquirers started sharing their experiences, it struck me how challenging the reduction process was. The first thought that came to mind was the experiences I dealt with during my journey and the emotions and similarities in our experiences. Before this study, my previous experiences as a Black male professional in higher education were valuable tools during the research portion of this study. However, they turned out to be difficult during the stages of analysis. Talking about my experiences with Black male professionals became a tendency that took place from start to finish with the phenomenon. This was an attempt to clear my mind of any thoughts or views that could prevent having an open consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). Throughout the research, notes were taken for reflection, as the phenomenologist ensured that any biases were placed in brackets during the process.

Final Reflection

Throughout the epoché stage, the phenomenologist's outlook on the phenomenon is that they have no understanding of what it means (Creswell, 2013). The process of epoché should be constantly pursued during the inquiry. Throughout the epoché process, it must be continuously pursued to maintain a state of mind. This part of the process presents challenges as it "requires presence, concentration, and attentiveness" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 88). Also described (Moustakas, 1994), the pursuit of epoché is to be transparent with myself and remain neutral whenever engaged with the phenomenon. Hence, “every quality is equal in value” (p. 87) and releasing the mind to be free of or “bondage to people” (p. 87).

Looking back on my experiences as a Black male professional from a first-generation student in college, mentorship was essential to me. I wanted to be transparent with readers and use the study to lead me to the discoveries of the factual essence of the phenomenon. Moustakas

(1994) added that essence refers to the commonality between participants' lived experiences. This required reflection before and after interviews with participants. The time I spent reflecting allowed me to be mindful of every thought that came to mind regarding the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Epoché allowed me to keep a clear and free mind while listening to the stories of each co-inquirer. In order to return to experience, empirical phenomenology is required to acquire comprehensive descriptions that present a reflective structural analysis that describes the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). My epoché has exposed Black male professionals, leadership, and mentorship, which are aspects that are valuable to me in my journey. Moustakas (1994) mentioned that a phenomenologist should be connected or have a personal interest in whatever he is searching to know about the phenomenon. This phenomenologist is wholeheartedly committed to mentorship, Black male professional leaders and finding the essence of the lived experiences of Black male professionals at PWIs.

Step 2. Phenomenological Reduction (Co-Inquirer Textural Descriptions)

During the phenomenological inquiry, Epoché is the first step (Moustakas, 1994). The second step is phenomenological reduction, and (Moustakas, 1994) mentioned three procedures for effectiveness:

1. Bracket the focus of the study so that it addresses each research question.
2. Horizontalization is a process that places all statements in equal value. Remove any data that is irrelevant to the research question and keep textual meaning that holds value to the phenomenon.
3. Codifying the themes and horizons in a textual description of the phenomenon.

Horizontalization is considering each horizon better to understand an experience (Moustakas, 1994). Every phenomenon must have equal value while seeking the true nature and meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) mentioned that reduction and elimination methods remove excessive and repeating statements. Throughout the stage of horizontalization, statements have been viewed as equal and considered for their connections to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). All statements without regard or emphasis on the study were removed while keeping the co- inquirer's documented description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

All co-inquirers' transcripts were transcribed and sent back for an accuracy check. All interview transcripts were checked multiple times and were ordered by interview questions. The co-inquirers made no changes after receiving their transcripts after each interview (see Appendix C).

Textural Narrative and Descriptive of Journey Into Higher Education

Co-Inquirer 1: Textural Description of Journey

Co-inquirer 1 shared this about his journey into higher education:

> Initially, I was not far from Los Angeles. We moved a lot as a kid. I'm a first-generation college student, and I went to seven different elementary schools before finally getting situated in Shreveport, Louisiana, and of course, a single mom at that point. I grew up watching older siblings and cousins make a lot of mistakes in school or out; they just made different life choices. I knew I never wanted to be a source of stress for my mom because I saw other family members causing her stress. I graduated with my bachelor's degree and got into my dream law school, George Washington University in DC. I had a crisis of conscience, like, "I can't do this." So, I stayed at LSUS, did my master's degree, and tried to figure out what direction I wanted to go. You don't see much non-White

representation on the neighborhood school side, but you don't see it on the magnet school side either.

Even at an early age, I only saw one of four or one of six Black males in the classroom setting. So, I learned early on, before I even knew the language of code-switching, what that meant and making sure that I'm fitting in in certain situations while understanding respectability politics and understanding that I've got to be able to work a little bit harder just to prove that I belong here. My mom was in the military, and she had gone to college, but she never graduated, so with my mom being overseas 13 time zones away, I had to figure out and navigate college on my own. Toward the end of graduate school, I wanted to potentially go into counseling psychology. I was still working in the casinos but decided to transition into higher education since I started getting involved with debate part-time. I don't want to call it success, but maybe more fulfillment is probably what I felt. Long after the students graduated, I was able to impact their lives. They still keep in touch.

It's a work of God, honestly. It's crazy how it happened. For 3 years straight, there was always, "Hey, I think we got an opportunity for you. We're going to meet and discuss it," then something always went wrong. Before then, most of my background was in casino finance, but I've been in higher education since 2016.

Co-Inquirer 2: Textural Description of Journey

Co-inquirer 2 came into higher education after considering other professional routes. I'm from the East Coast, California, but I was raised in New York. Texas is definitely different for me. He attended K-12 in New York and completed his undergrad degree at the Carolinas. He also attended a small HBCU, Johnson C. Smith University. From there,

I received my master's degree, and I have been in higher education off and on for about 16 years now as a student affairs professional. I was at a crossroads, really. I took the LSAT twice and considered going into the practice of law heavily.

It was like a calling, or I was supposed to be in education. There was something very intrinsic about that connection and relationship. I literally had a come-to-Jesus moment where I stopped applying to law schools. He had a conversation with his cousin, who was in a doctoral program herself at the time. I literally told her; I think I'm supposed to get a doctorate. When I grew up, I saw a lot of Black women educators saw a lot of Black women in leadership roles in my youth, but I did not see a lot of Black males. I always miss the opportunity to see a Black male either from an educator's perspective or as an administrator. I didn't have my first Black male teacher until I got to undergrad.

Understanding how important it is for Black men in education and how necessary we are in the spaces is a part of why I'm here. It was based on the experiences I had as an undergrad, specifically going to an HBCU. He recalled his other mother, Dr. J, who was his mentor. We were like her babies. I went to pretty good schools growing up, but everybody was White, for the most part. There were Black teachers sprinkled in there, but there weren't a lot of educators along my journey. Even those experiences were important; it's like being cared about. The relationships he built with faculty were nothing that he had seen in his professional life.

I've never seen Black students congregate around the faculty's office or hang out in their department. It wasn't an inviting experience. A classmate of mine entered the practice of higher education, and I was like, "Oh wow, I didn't know that was a job that

you could get straight out of undergrad." That's what brought me into the profession: seeing a classmate do it and realizing that it was possible.

Co-Inquirer 3: Textural Description of Journey

Co-inquirer 3 is from Rock Island, Illinois.

I attended Morehouse College for my undergraduate. I went to Auburn University for my master's and Ph.D. I'm currently starting my assistant professor at the University of North Texas. What led him to higher education was the lack of diversity. Black men in higher education across the lifespan; how we see so few of us. We know that representation matters, and so, part of being at the college level is for the other Black men to see.

It's a space where we can also belong and have representation; the other part is enhancing the experiences of students of color, particularly an undergraduate. There's more than just one reason why I ultimately chose higher education. Growing up, I went to what we call a Title IX school in Illinois. It's a low-income elementary school, so it's primarily Black. I was smart but also had behavior issues like not paying attention and talking in class. In fifth grade, an African American teacher spoke life into me. She raised the standard and held me accountable in different ways that my previous teachers hadn't.

I started to see myself differently. I knew I could do what I wanted to do at that point. Growing up, I was the only Black male in these classes through high school, which was isolating. I never had a Black male teacher outside of PE and all the way through college. He never knew the path of going to graduate school; he was barely figuring out how to get into college. I got there, I got more exposed to research, and I had a good experience and graduated. I knew I wanted to do academia. That's probably why I ended

up in Texas. I've been able to connect with a lot of students, even in my first semester being here. I'm just being myself and being in a space where I'm comfortable. It's the small things. Culture is the connection we have outside of class. I've never had a Black male teacher throughout my high school years. So, I wanted to be that presence for other Black men.

Co-Inquirer 4: Textural Description of Journey

Co-inquirer 4 shared this about his journey:

I grew up in Philly in the hood, and everybody didn't get out, and I didn't think I was going to get out. Between drugs, prison, and the streets, it just didn't happen. I graduated in 1972 and ended up going into the Air Force. After working for a year, I ended up going to Alaska and stayed there for 11 years. Then, I rededicated my life to the Lord because the bottom of my life was falling out. So, I started a business, and three weeks later, I ended up at Alaska Bible College, and God turned my whole life around. I still end up losing myself, but I ended up with two kids from Alaska Bible College.

Later, he moved to Dallas, TX, in 1986.

I stayed and graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary and began teaching at Southern Bible College. I taught there for 15 years, became assistant to the president, and ran a night school. My wife of 20 years died of ARDS. It's a rare lung disease. I kept wondering what to do with my time, and that's when I went back to school and got my doctorate from Southern Seminary in Kentucky in global missions, and I've been in missions for the last 35 years. For 15 years at a predominantly White college, I was a recruiter who recruited all kinds of students. I love traditional and non-traditional students, those that are 30,40, 50, and even 60, but I don't think they can still get back to

school. I love those types of students. My gift is a cultivator, so I'm going to bring the best out in the students. That's just me. God wired me like that. I've got the gift of encouragement, and that's all that it is.

Co-Inquirer 5: Textural Description of Journey

Co-inquirer 5 shared that he is a third-generation native of Detroit.

My great-grandparents moved from Mississippi to Alabama. I had another stream come from Arkansas that made stops in Chicago, Flint, MI, and Saginaw, MI, and some came to Detroit, where I was initially born. So, I'd like to situate it in that context because acknowledging the great migration is vitally important to understanding how Black people have been systematically pushed out of their places. I'm a proud graduate of Detroit Public Schools. In high school, I ended up getting a 15 on my ACT. My middle brother went to the University of Michigan, but I couldn't get into school there because of my grade point average. Instead, I went to an HBCU, Kentucky State, to be exact. One of the things that I like to say is that the University of Michigan could never do what Kentucky State did, and that is taking a brother with a 15 on the ACT and producing a Ph.D.

I never felt like school was relevant to what I was experiencing, what I was going through, and what I was interested in. I remember being in 10th grade in this geometry class, and I asked the teacher what does this have to do with anything I want to do in my life. He looked back at me and was like, I don't know; once he said that, I was like deuces. I put my head down for the rest of the class. However, if my teacher had been in tune and understood how much I loved basketball and track. He would understand how to

connect the two so that I could connect with learning. After I graduated, I later became a teacher.

As a science teacher, he learned that every gymnasium is a science classroom, and every science classroom is a gymnasium.

For the student's sake, it's about being intellectually tapped because there's this idea of learning with no purpose. I'm an associate professor, and I've been here for 10 years. Prior to that, I was a high school science teacher. I thought about the level or scale of impact that I wanted to have. I thought of being a principal, but the level of depth and impact I wanted overtime meant I had to work in higher education.

He thought about life and the parameters that he wanted to have. When he was a teacher, his principal would be there on Saturdays and Sundays, and the first one there and the last one to go. She exemplified the amount of time that it took to be an amazing school leader.

Composite Textural Description

Each participant in this phenomenological study was an African American male professional. All the participants graduated high school and received their bachelor's degrees. The participants have all received their master's degree, with one participant who does not have a Doctorate. Before transitioning into higher education, each participant had their own lived experiences that shaped why they chose to serve at a PWI in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Georgia, and Florida. For a better understanding of this unique phenomenon, participants were selected based on whether they had 3 years serving at a PWI in one of these states and were seeking tenure or promotion. Co-inquirer 1 has been an educator for over 15 years, taught seminary, served as an admissions officer, and assisted the vice president of student affairs. Co-inquirer 2 has been an educator for over 5 years and has served as the chair of arms of the home

scholars. He served as an administrator within the University Future Research Summer Scholars, including serving on the national committee for the North American Society of the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity, and is now an assistant professor in Texas.

Co-inquirer 3 has been a student affairs professional for 16 years while serving in roles such as director of undergraduate admissions, academic advisor, graduate admissions, and now a well-known CRT scholar. Co-inquirer 4 is a younger educator who has been in and out of higher education for 8 years. His educational experiences include serving as director of strategic enrollment initiatives, coaching debate, and teaching public speaking. Co-inquirer 5 has served in higher education for 10 years and served a variety of roles in public and higher education. He currently serves as an associate professor in Texas, while, in the past, he served as a science teacher and graduate committee co-chair, which helps facilitate various departments.

Table 2

List of Participants

Participants	Race	Education	Type of PWI	Seeking tenure
Co-inquirer 1	Black	PHD	Public	Yes
Co-inquirer 2	Black	Masters	Public	Yes
Co-inquirer 3	Black	PHD	Public	Yes
Co-inquirer 4	Black	PHD	Public	Yes
Co-inquirer 5	Black	PHD	Public	Yes

Salient Themes

Moustakas (1994) mentioned that in order to have a more comprehensive description of the phenomenon, the structural and textural themes should be united to develop what is called the "essence" of the phenomenon. Uniting the textural and structural themes that surfaced

throughout data analysis and imaginative variation, the essence of the phenomenon of the lived experiences of these African American male professionals of color seeking tenure or promotion was assessed. While examining the essence of any phenomenon, it is understood that the phenomenon would never be completely conveyed. Each of the experiences and themes brought about in this study is applicable to the five African American male professionals and their lived experiences working at a PWI while seeking tenure or promotion. While examining the analysis of the data, relatable findings were recognized, and any statements that were in concurrence with relatable findings were removed Moustakas (1994).

In this qualitative study, five major themes were discovered after several cycles of coding: (a) challenging experiences as a professional male of color at a PWI, (b) peers and tenure, (c) Whiteness, (d) racism, and (e) lack of professional men of color. Additionally, several subthemes emerged from the data. These themes included (a) isolation, (b) bridgebuilding, (c) tools for success, (d) coping methods, and (e) relationships.

Step 3: Imaginative Variation (Structural Descriptions)

In the third portion of data analysis, imaginative variation was expended, and during this stage of the process, in order to reach imaginative variation, correlate the structural meanings that generate the textural meanings Moustakas (1994):

1. Identify the underlying themes or context that justify the surfacing of the phenomenon;
2. Exploring the fundamental frameworks that give rise to emotions and thoughts in connection to the phenomenon, including aspects like the temporal and spatial dimensions, bodily experiences, materiality, causality, self-perception, and interpersonal relationships;

3. Seeking examples that vividly depict the consistent structural themes and aid in constructing a descriptive framework for the phenomenon. (p. 99)

The beginning of this phenomenological inquiry started with interviews via Zoom with each participant, which was accessible to the participant and me. After conducting all interviews, the phenomenologist bracketed thoughts and feelings regarding each interview to retain an exact outlook of the data. This method allowed the phenomenologist's feelings and opinionated thoughts to predetermine the research. Each participant was provided the chance to overlook their transcripts for member checking and the accuracy of their statements.

Data Condensation

After each interview, the documents were transcribed and read over several times. As I carefully reviewed the information, I began to identify and remove anything that could identify the participants and their privacy. The phenomenologist highlighted words, phrases, thoughts, and ideas throughout the interviews. The phenomenologist color-coded words, phrases, or ideas and did two passes to identify the underlying themes and subthemes.

Table 3

First Pass Coding

Questions	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5
Challenging Experiences (green)	12	50	15	41	36
Mentorship (green)	14	22	19	21	3
Purpose (pink)	16	11	19	27	12
Relationships with Peers (pink)	6	23	13	40	17
Ways to succeed (pink)	12	33	28	26	14
Purpose at PWI (yellow)	12	17	24	26	15
Coping Strategies (orange)	12	30	23	26	19
Lack of Representation (purple)	11	10	6	18	10

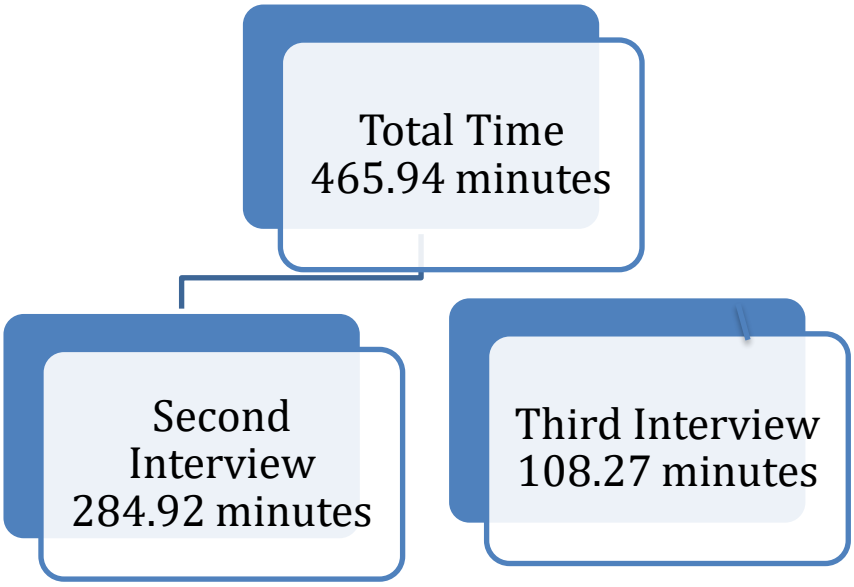
Table 4

Second Pass Coding

Questions	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5
Challenging Experiences (green)	6	26	6	21	17
Mentorship (green)	5	10	8	10	3
Purpose (pink)	7	9	11	14	8
Relationships with Peers (pink)	3	14	6	20	6
Ways to succeed (pink)	5	12	10	11	5
Purpose at PWI (yellow)	5	8	14	12	7
Coping Strategies (orange)	6	15	13	14	6
Lack of Representation (Purple	6	7	4	6	4

Figure 1

Final Pass Coding



Following a more in-depth review, themes and corresponding subthemes were identified.

Theme 1: Challenging Experiences as a Male of Color at PWI

Challenging experiences as a man of color were featured themes that were analyzed throughout each of the five African American male professional experiences at a PWI while seeking tenure or promotion in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Florida. It has been noted that experiences as an African American male professional at a PWI are often marginalized when it comes to promotion and tenure (Johnson et al., 2018). Co-inquirer 1 approved and mentioned:

> I think about my first job when I got fired it was in undergraduate admissions and I wasn't able to recognize at the time what was racism. In the sense of transparency, on one occasion, my director asked me to take a walk and fired me on the walk "fired me on the walk." He then said you can go get your things, and I'm clearly not thinking straight, so I just left devastated. That was my first experience with workplace racism and what it

> meant to be a token. Since being in Texas, my experiences here have been violent; as the first-ever duly appointed faculty member, I chose this place because they really sold it. And I get here, and they lied, man. They lied. They lied.

Co-inquirer 2 said this:

> Oh, my goodness. That can be tricky. You can be considered to represent all people who look like you. We know that seems to be the case, but we're all different. We're very different and unique. They will look at me for certain things that are geared toward diversity or people of color. It also begins to be tricky because sometimes they think I know everything about being a Black man, which is not the case. You also have to be brave enough to bring up color and diversity if it's being overlooked, which can also be tricky because you don't want to be the person who's always like, what about Black people? So, on that end of the spectrum, I guess I have a seat at the table or an opportunity to bring up the idea of diversity, but before you get a seat at the table, are they even considering it?

Co-Inquirer 3 went on to say:

> So, as the Pharaohs kept changing, so did the attitudes. Most of them pronounced that they were Christian, but the attitude and the way I was treated, man, they just never matched. There was this one African American faculty I would talk to from time to time, and they would remind me, remember, you are still in the South. During the transition of the vice president of student affairs, my registrar wanted to have a sit-down talk with me, which was one of those kinds of talks. They asked staff how they felt about the changes, and I told them I felt unappreciated here. I feel devalued here. Sometimes, you have to just call it out. It's not about the power plays. It’s not about entitlement. You've got the

> same brain as us, and God is the one who sees us all equal; we're smart and intelligent beings just like you.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

> I'm from Detroit, born in the 80s. I have a different demeanor about how I go about things, and I am respectfully still authentic about who I am. So many times, I don't think this institution, particularly this White system, is ready for somebody to be entirely Black in all their humanity and all their authenticity. And then, on another part, I've had the opportunity to work with some fantastic Black students who push me intellectually and theoretically, some amazing school leaders with whom I get to partner. My experience as a Black man at a PWI has been marked with racism, anti-Blackness, and discrimination. At the same time, it is an excellent opportunity to work with some amazing folks.

Co-inquirer 5 shared:

> This was a big struggle when I first got here. On the first day, I was helping a student, and we walked across campus to get assistance. We ran into a young White woman working behind the window. She looked at me and shooed me off, but she didn't pay me any attention. I kept getting a lot of those initial pushbacks from people. I don't know if it's being a young Black male or a young Black male in this type of seat, but you can't separate those experiences.

Isolation. Each participant in this study frequently referred to being isolated or feeling isolated in their roles with little support. The five participants mentioned their experiences with isolation while seeking tenure or promotion. When speaking with the participants about isolation, the participants shared this.

Co-Inquirer 1 and Co-inquirer 3 shared the same familiarities, as mentioned,

I often find myself the youngest and the only one in the space and many of the spaces. And that means I have to intentionally find the opportunity to connect or find connection, sameness, and a sense of belonging. I remember that at my previous institution, I had to make intentional attempts to connect with folks outside because I worked in the president's office. I was a director, and everyone else was a program manager and coordinator, and my age or peers, but no one of color. I would have a yearly lunch, and my office would pay for it. I would call a meeting and gather all the bros and sorrows or different departments. This was to gather us all at a round table so people could see if they needed support or connections. That opportunity was there. In the sense of transparency, this one time, I was hired as the token admissions counselor.

Co-inquirer 2 shared: “That can be tricky. You can be considered to represent all people who look like you. We know that's the case. We're not all the same. We're very different and unique.”

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

Yeah, it has been profoundly anti-Black and deeply racist. I think it's deeply embedded in the culture, and the ways of doing it are the norm. On the one hand, I think sometimes I'm the first Black professor some people have.

Co-inquirer 5 added:

On another note, a young lady had forgotten to register for an event I was hosting. She said this doesn't seem right. I'm not supposed to be here. When I told her I was the director, the tone changed, but previously, she called me boy. This is 2022, right? I didn't even know people still use this type of language. I can't cuss back; I can't be angry without being the angry Black man or without being hostile. You just learn how to

> navigate some of these spaces, so people see the title, and then they're willing to go along and have a little bit more buy-in into you. I don't have anybody in similar roles or with a Ph.D. or higher education who can bend me toward the next step. Like a Black male professional or network of people just to be able to bounce ideas off of or just to vent about what's going on.

Theme 2: Working Amongst Peers and Tenure

Another major theme in this phenomenological inquiry was working amongst peers and tenure. With a history of challenges early in faculty of color career, it has been noted that working in these hostile environments negatively affects campus culture, research censorship, ineffective mentorship, and unrealistic expectations (Johnson et al., 2018). The experiences of each co-inquirer were examined, and a subtheme, tools for success, emerged in this inquiry. The participants in this phenomenological study referenced the importance of knowing who you are. Each of the five participants stated the importance of their purpose, which emerged as another subtheme of bridgebuilding. The participants in this study repeatedly referenced the importance of being a visual representation for others to know that these options are available to African American male professionals. Networking and relationships between Black professors and students are the significance of mentoring, cultivating a sense of community, providing proactive help, and being consistent with their identities, while these traits follow careers as faculty members (Johnson et al., 2018).

Co-inquirer 1 shared:

> There are some people who just, contrary to belief, tell them that the sky is blue, and they're going to come up with a million reasons why the sky isn't blue because the clouds are out. Make sure people know that this is a safe space to start moving on to their next

step, whatever it may be. There are some people who just aren't going to do right. Some of those people have opinions on how things should go. But I still do believe there are some undertones with some of the same people that I had initial struggles with. These are some of the same people that are completely unresponsive when I need help or I need them to do something. It's tough at first because so much of what we experience is based on and rooted in survival tactics. I have to switch out of the mindset of survival tactics and understand the lay of the land just to be able to keep a foot in the door. I think there definitely needs to be on-campus support groups. So, for me, I think it's knowing what the college's mission is and if it aligns closely with my personal mission. I never want someone to walk away feeling less than in any situation, especially knowing that there are plenty of people who look just like me and are out in the community trying to access higher education, whatever roadblocks may exist.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

I think the majority of my relationships with my peers have been great. They have been nourishing. I think the relationships that are the most tested are with the people who hold the institutional authority, particularly when they profess to be equitable but practice inequity. They profess to be just but practice injustice, period. To be in this space is to be a representation of others. So that people can see another Black man in higher education.

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

With faculty and staff, it could be good, but with a lot of the Whites, you always had to prove yourself. You were never good enough. They would hear you, but really, your lights are on, but ain't nobody home. The experience was not inclusive, not at all, but enough to feel it. I got pushed aside and left to defend myself in a lot of different ways. I

had to wait, and I was forgotten about and slipped through their cracks. They didn't see color. They did, but they didn't.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

I think being a Black male does have a lot to do with how I'm treated. I'd like to think I get to serve on this national committee role because they were interested in diversifying the committee. That was a favorable situation landing on the committee because there were not very many Black men in the organization. He can be positive because he got me in, but the negative is did I get in on merit or did I get in on skin color and because I'm Black. As I said, some of it is important that you have to address, but oftentimes, just brush it off. I try to be mindful of what battles I'm willing to take on and what battles don't matter at this moment. I don't have a safe space at a PWI.

Co-inquirer 5 shared:

The academy is rough, and you can't exist in this space by yourself. But you also want to make sure that in your attempt to earn tenure, in your attempts to be here permanently, that you also don't lose sight of yourself, that you don't lose sight of your own moral compass, that you don't become ethnically misguided because you want to be in this space so bad. Knowing that you are worthy of being there and you're not an impostor. Even though there may not be other people who look like you, you're not an impostor, and you belong. You are of great value; you are perspective, and you are needed in that space. They're going to tell you that you need to do XY and Z. They're going to prescribe. They're going to take their perspective on how they can easily show up in that space and then tell you what you need to do. You get asked to do all these things related to diversity, but nothing's diversified. These PWIs have been assigned to get into diversity

> and inclusion for hundreds of years. They're all on this bandwagon to say that they have diversity on the committee, but it's not. Oftentimes, they don't get your opinion, professional feedback, or added value, so you'd be quiet sometimes.

Tools for Success. All of the participants in the study also discussed the need to have tools for success for professional men of color at a PWI. Each of the participants expressed what tools they thought were necessary from their experiences. Co-Inquirer 1 shared:

> I think first, there definitely needs to be a real talk about what higher education is overall before they get into higher education. I've got a team of two recruiters, and then I've got several student workers who all are people of color. We've had talks about code-switching. We've had talks about respectability politics. We've approached these topics in a way that you need to understand in order to use the tools to navigate this system. Make sure that they understand that even in higher education when you look around, there are a lot of people here who don't look like you. I think for young Black males to be successful, they've got to be aware that there's even a game going on, right? It's tough at first because so much of what we experience is rooted in survival tactics. I think you have to switch out of that mindset of survival tactics and understanding the lay of the land just to be able to keep a foot in the door. I think there definitely needs to be on-campus support groups. I definitely think there needs to be a stated focus from PWIs from the beginning to be able to embrace diversity in all its forms and encourage Black males not to have to play the game of respectability politics. I am intensely creating a space for these individuals to have a support focus as faculty and staff to be able to feel free and able to have a seat at the table. I think those are some big steps that we need for Black

men, in particular, to feel like we have a seat at the table and will be provided with the training and development to be successful at a PWI.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

I think you have to know who you are. You have to know who you are and be grounded in a space or a community outside of the university because if you're not, the university has a culture and a life of its own, and it's easy for you to get sucked up into it. I also think it's having clarity, a purpose for your why, and your reason to serve there. I think it's often revisiting your value system to make sure that it is what it is and live within those values. I also think it's surrounding yourself with folks who celebrate you and don't just tolerate you.

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

Man, if you want to work for PWI, you've got to have a strong support group, or you have to have a strong purpose. You need to have a strong calling, and you can get overlooked while conscious of overlooking a whole lot of stuff, knowing that you're there to make a difference.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

Knowing who you are and why you're there. I think you have to have a solid understanding of the mission at hand, which you have to stay centered on. A lot of things can annoy you and can take your momentum away from focusing on your purpose. I think it's important because there's a lot of BS going on, and you can focus on that and forget why you're there.

Co-inquirer 5 shared:

> I think you have to know who you are. You have to know who your people are, and you have to know who your co-conspirators are and what connections they have. The academy is rough, and you can't exist in this space by yourself, but you also want to make sure that in your attempts to earn tenure, you also don't lose sight of yourself and you don't lose sight of your own moral compass. You don't want to become ethically misguided because you want to be in the space so bad. Another tool would be knowing that you're worthy of being there and you're not an impostor. Even though there may not be other people who look like you, you belong to be in that space, and your perspective is needed. I think that when I see it, I know who you are; I mean knowing yourself and your value. You're not just a number filler. You're there on a mission, and if you don't know your mission, they're going to tell you who you are.

Bridgebuilding. Another subtheme emerged as each co-inquirer related to their experiences in bridge building and their purpose as to why they chose to serve at a PWI in Texas, Oklahoma, Georgia, Florida, and Louisiana. Each co-inquirer frequently mentioned what their purpose was and how their being in those spaces creates more chances of visibility for African American male professionals to inspire other Black male professionals and people of color. Co-inquirer 1 shared:

> I saw a lot of Black women educators, so a lot of Black women in leadership roles in my youth and in my development. I did not see a lot of Black male professionals. Even in high school, the class that graduated before my freshman year had a Black principal. He retired after that year. When I was in fourth grade, my fifth grade teacher was supposed to be a Black male. He left the school there the next year. So, I always missed the opportunity to see a Black male from either an educator's perspective or as an

administrator. So, I didn't have my first Black male teacher until I got to undergrad. So, understanding how important it is for Black men in education and how necessary we are in those spaces is part of why I'm here.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

There are a few things that come to mind when I think about my purpose. Again, as I said, representation matters. We know this specifically for athletes. I ran track in high school, and I got a scholarship to a PWI. Again, representation still matters. A lot of Black individuals end up at PWI. I think that representation still matters there at these high-profile places where they still recruit and retain a lot of Black students. I love research, and I do my research on underrepresented individuals as well. It just made sense to me to serve at a PWI.

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

I would say the student was my purpose and being a representation. To be honest with you, the only thing that kept me there was serving the students. I've been pushed aside and left to defend myself in a lot of different ways. I've slipped through the cracks. It isn’t for the money; it isn’t for nothing but for the individual walking through that door with a dream in their mind of me helping them.

Co-inquirer 4:

One aspect was representation. Just so people can see another Black man in higher education. I think that, along with that, there is a psychological benefit for people. To just be able to see and feel what it's like to have a man look like you and say, oh, what up, bro, entering the classroom. I remember one of my good doctoral students when he first came for his visit. I dapped him up, and he was like, oh man, I knew I was coming here

> when you dapped me up. I think that's the part. It was like Obama. You know what I mean? Like, I'm not Obama, but I'm saying it did something psychologically for people to be able to see a Black family in the White House. I think another purpose that it serves is that it brings Black intellectual thought into a space that has been predominantly White, that as Black people, we don't agree on every single thing, but there is a way of being, a way of knowing, and a way of living in the world. Then another purpose is to serve intellectual and theoretical influences that I have as a benefit to other Black male professionals finding their way at a PWI. On the spiritual plane, I believe it serves the purpose that I am here to do the will of God, to bring glory to God, and to do the things that I do. I'll say a psychological representation and an intellectual, theoretical contribution, but then also like a spiritual service.

Co-inquirer 5 shared:

> I have to know the college mission and know that it aligns with my personal mission. I never want someone to walk away feeling less than in any situation, especially knowing that there are plenty of people who look just like me, who are out in the community, and who aren't able to access higher education. Or even be a representation so they know that these options are out there or they're capable of getting into these spaces.

Theme 3: Whiteness

Another major theme that surfaced in this phenomenological inquiry was seeking to find out the participant's perspectives on the purpose of PWIs and who it serves. All of the five participants shared their perspectives on who PWIs are supposed to serve and stated that they believe it serves Whiteness. Each of the participants shared their statements about the impact of PWIs. Co-inquirer 1 shared:

> About a PWI, overall, I would say that's where you get a lot of legacy teaching, and that's where you get a lot of grandfathered-in cultures and customs. Many tenured professors who don't look like you or me can call the shots and change the system, but it's not representative of what benefits everyone else. I think that PWIs do not place a great emphasis on the experience of people of color. It ends up leading to those people usually getting left out.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

> The purpose of a PWI has been what it is: one of the biggest gentrifiers in our neighborhoods. You can say you want to do good, but the good that you want to do has to be detached from the historical interest of power, money, and Whiteness. It must be connected to the community and people's needs. I think they serve the same historical purpose, but if they reckon, there are places in which they've started to imagine that they can do some powerful good in the world for people. But the purpose of a PWI is to propagate the knowledge, that White knowledge, White wealth, to protect it, and to show you that it is still alive and well.

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

> I don't know; maybe they are educating a lot of their own. So, as for why they exist, I don't know, man. It's pretty much just tooting their own horn and maybe for their own because it seems like that because they're the ones to be the gatekeepers to keep this environment to themselves. Whatever their culture is, that is what it becomes.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

> What some of them should be doing is supposed to be a land grant institution; they're supposed to contribute to the community at large. It's to enhance the land and provide

> services to improve the area or community. Some PWIs need to catch up on the mission. The concept of publicly funded agriculture and technical schools is the idea that was built and created by Congress, and it's supposed to emphasize that many of the public schools or public lands were taken away from indigenous people. They took them away to create this university, so the idea of this bill was not to give the land back but to serve the people they took it from. It's not happening, but laws like this have come into play.

Co-inquirer 5 added:

> I think PWIs are here to uphold the status quo of Whiteness. If I'm being quite honest with you, PWIs were not created for the employment of Black men and women, for the education of Black men and women, and for non-gender binary people or non-gender identifying individuals. It was not created for us. It reminds us of that all the time, and I think the reason why it is so violent is because of its foundations. This country wasn't created for anybody but cis-gendered wealthy people or heterosexual presenting White men. So, when we experience violence, those are reminders of what we're pushing up against, what we're fighting back against, a system that was never intended to be inclusive of us.

Theme 4: Racism

The next major theme that emerged in this inquiry was racism. Under the significant theme of racism, two subthemes also emerged: coping methods and relationships. Each of the five participants stated that due to experiencing racism, relationships, and coping strategies have been a factor in their continued success in higher education. Co-inquirer 1 shared:

> First, calling it what it is. I think microaggressions are cute words, not to say racism. I think part of it is first understanding what it is. I don't like the term Karen. So, if her

> name is Karen and she's being a racist, then she's Karen, the racist. I don't believe in using language meant to hide the violence of a person or an act. When we say microaggressions, it minimizes the impact of whatever that word or that experience was. We need to call it racism because that's what it is. There was a time when I went to EOS, Title IX, and filed a retaliation and discrimination complaint against both my department chair and my director on the basis of race and gender because he explicitly stated about me being Black and making more than a Black woman.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

> Sometimes you've got to call shit out. I still choose my battles wisely, but sometimes it's just like, OK, that was a bit much, so sometimes you've got to call it out. They may not see this point of view that they didn't know, but let me help you know so that, hopefully, you don't do it next time. I try not to be a person who's always upset and always thinks that something is directly geared towards me. I learned when to or when not to take it personally.

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

> One is keeping my focus while I'm there. Two is learning how to persevere and let God fight my battle. I had to bring my spirituality into it because if I didn't let him control my mind and my heart, I would go off.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

> I will admit that I haven't dealt with it well at all. Sometimes, unfortunately, I have internalized it to the point where it impacted me psychologically; my heart rate went up, and I got headaches. It had me stressed out, and my hair turned gray.

Co-inquirer 5 added:

> I have to personally check myself, not just coming to work every day but just being here in general. Most of us have changed since we were younger. I was a big hothead, and I was always ready to throw hands with everybody at the drop of a dime just to make myself heard. I have to remember to take that with me, especially in those moments whenever someone calls me boy. Unfortunately, as a Black man, I have to be the bigger man to be able to brush it off. I think you have to know what your mission is along with the purpose, know what the goal is, and just keep that at the forefront of the work that I'm doing. It sucks as a Black man. That's the way I have to navigate the system because if I were ever to commit on a young White woman the same that a Black man I got commented on, they would walk me out of this building right now. Some of that is just learning the game.

Coping Methods. Each participant added that coping methods had been a huge factor as they continued to seek tenure and promotion. Co-inquirer 1 shared:

> I think speech and debate taught me that there is a way for me to be able to think critically about situations and to be able to use my voice instead of using any type of physicality. A little bit more of just being inward-looking and understanding who you are helps a little bit. Or I would call it self-reflecting. It's a continual onslaught of racism. If I had to stop and focus on that every day, I would never get any work done. That sucks, and it's really crappy to hear, isn't it? You've got to pick and choose your battles based on what it is you're going to defend; try to be authentic to yourself and be authentic to your core values as a person and whatever type of moral compass or religious background or focus you may have.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

> Sometimes, just taking my mind off work has been one of the mechanisms that have helped me. Having that space to exercise actually helps me work out and exercise. But I have to be diligent because if not, it's easy to fall back in. Keep in mind I'm also tired because I have a family. Another aspect of coping for me would be having prayer and having the time in the morning that I can set aside to connect to a larger spiritual plane to God. Another coping mechanism I don't think is the best is binge-watching TV because my mind just needs to connect to something else.

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

> Regarding coping, I would say that knowing that my work matters when I can help my students, especially the African American students on campus, I will help all of them. I mean, anybody could come to me, but I'm going to help out and look out because that's what drives me.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

> The strategy is to vent. I'd call up a colleague in a heartbeat. Also, when I can write, I'm going to write, and it's just like a personal thing. I think it became a part of my identity when I decided to get my Ph.D. because research is writing.

Co-inquirer 5 added:

> There are a lot of ways that I've coped. I did much better in my second year than in my first. The first year, I was dealing with it, and I couldn't go outside because of the pandemic, so I was kind of stuck; I even went to therapy. I was across the country and by myself during the pandemic. I don't really have anywhere to put my grief or the loss that I was experiencing. You will see many of my experiences written about in an op-ed or an article. I write about it because it's therapeutic for me, but it also helps and forewarns and

> foreshadows other people. I don't think a lot of people can understand the experiences of racism unless they can touch them, see them, and read them, as I mentioned before.

Relationships. Another subtheme stated by each of the co-inquires related to the reason for their perseverance while working at a PWI seeking tenure and promotion. The co-inquires mentioned that due to these impacts, they were able to impact others while working at a PWI. Co-inquirer 1 shared:

> I don't have anybody in a similar role who has a PhD. So, I figured out that the best way to help myself and Black male professionals is to form networks. Networks of people are just to be able to bounce ideas off each other in that way and on a friendship and professional basis. Sometimes, I even vent about what's going on.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

> I think of it in multiple ways. I think of a network of mentors, not just one person, but I have a network where I can go to different people for different things. Some of those folks are inside the institution, and others are outside. Some people I go to for advice on how to be a father, some give me advice on teaching on my syllabus, and some give me spiritual advice, so I have that. I have mentors and also have sponsors. For me, a mentor is somebody who can chop it up and they can give me information about where I am at that time in my life. I can share with them, and they can give lived experience and wisdom, but a sponsor is somebody who can do that but also has the institutional authority to make a call to get something done for me. A mentor might be able to talk me through something, but my sponsor might be able to connect me to the resources that I need to make something happen. At the same time, I've also tried to model that and reflect on what has been given back to me, other professors, and other students. I'll never

forget when I first walked into the first building in my undergrad, and it said, “Enter to learn, exit to serve.”

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

I would say just getting back with the Texas Association of Black Personnel and Higher Education group. We could bond, and they'd talk about different things and challenges that they had. And a lot of times, it may just be a little bit of getting together and playing some spades or some dominoes while jamming background music, but at the end of the day, we're still professional folk. My life totally changed when I went to that first conference. I'm sitting around Black people who were intelligent, smart, doctors, brothers and sisters, and we're slapping dominoes while being down to earth and talking and kicking it, man. I had no idea there were any Black deans, provosts, or even Black presidents or vice presidents. It was a no-brainer for me.

Co-inquirer 4 added:

I have quite a few but mostly informal roles as needed. I also have a Black female mentor; I can always rely on my mentors or ask them questions. One of my male mentors always gives me great responses to my questions about tenure. He just got tenured to associate, and he's about 4 or 5 years ahead of me, so it's always good to have that relationship and wisdom.

Co-inquirer 5 shared:

I think I had the privilege of being co-advised. I had two major professions for my Ph.D. program, and they were both very different people. They have different mentoring styles, and I like that about them. There were certain things that I liked better than the others in one mentor. That allowed me to experience the full spectrum of it and figure out what

> kind of mentoring works for me. I think it helps when you personalize it, period. Going forward, when I ask people to be my mentors, I know what mentoring style works for me based on those experiences. They catered to what I needed, and it's not about them prescribing what they wanted. We have to find balance. One of my female mentors, in particular, has a harsh way of how she gives me feedback, and it's only because the grants world is harsh. It is like she's giving me a taste of what it will be like, if you will. You've chosen these people for a reason: They're investing in you and want to see you win so you can make space for others.

Theme 5: The Lack of Professional Men of Color

The final major theme that emerged in this phenomenological inquiry was the lack of professional men of color. Each of the five participants mentioned that they noticed a lack of professional men of color at PWIs. Co-inquirer 1 stated:

> I didn't have my first Black male educator until I got to college, but in the same breath, there were not a lot of Black male professors in any of the classes that I took. In fact, my only Black male professors were in math and economics. Sometimes, I would have Black male professors in STEM. At PWIs, I would say that we're here. We're so spread out and far apart that we don't even realize that we're here. When we look at the Academy at large, we are not a large number; it is not enough of us to have a mighty force. Even with those who exist here, not all of us agree with the liberation of our people, so we're not trying to make waves or spaces for other people to come in. A lot of Black men who are in higher ed and academia, a lot of them have drunk the Kool-Aid, bro. You would be surprised and ashamed of how they would tap dance for Whiteness, how they will

absolutely associate themselves and assimilate themselves to be in proximity to Whiteness and disassociate from Blackness.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

Ultimately, I decided that I'd rather be at PWI, but I kind of toyed with the idea of being in an HBCU. From a research standpoint, it's unfortunate that a lot of HBCUs are not tier-one or R1-level research institutions. If you want to do research, get grant funding, and get favorable teaching loads, PWI is where you want to be. Concerning the lack of professional males of color at a PWI, I would say they have more men of color at HBCUs.

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

I would say we're simply just not there. I would also say the opportunities are there, but most of those opportunities are more likely at an HBCU. The ones that are there just need opportunities. Man, we're just as smart as they are and can run anything you put in front of us. God is the one that made the brain into a human being, but he didn't put any color on it. We're smart and intelligent Black people.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

Man, I don't think I had one Black professor in science or biology courses. At the HBCU, when I took Anatomy and Physiology, it was a White man. Cell biology was an Indian man. Chemistry was a man from Pakistan. However, when I went to education, most of my professors were Black. I haven't worked at Howard or Morehouse, but yeah, I would say there's a lack of professional males of color at a PWI. Although I think proportionately, there are more at HBCUs than there are at PWIs.

Co-inquirer 5 added:

> There's definitely a lack of Black male professionals in higher education. That's just a full stop. It's an empirical proof that we can see. I would also say yes and no. I think where the "no" comes in is that there are people who may be deterred from higher education because they don't see a place for them to be able to enter higher education, and then they also don't see people who look like them. I think that it helps whenever you see someone who looks like you from a similar background and experiences or who is successful in higher education, and we don't see that. Here at my school, I want to say I see 10 of us, and I know that number because we're working on a men of color academic grant to bring some programs specifically targeting young men in higher education.

Step 4: Synthesis (Essences)

The five major themes were presented and examined as each of the five participants perceived them. In this qualitative study, five major themes were discovered after several cycles of coding: (a) challenging experiences as a professional male of color at a PWI, (b) peers and tenure, (c) Whiteness, (d) racism, and (e) lack of professional men of color. Additionally, several subthemes emerged from the data. These themes included (a) isolation, (b) bridgebuilding, (c) tools for success, (d) coping methods, (e) relationships, and (f) workload.

The first research question asks, "How do Black male faculty describe their lived experiences at selected Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?" I found the following themes and subthemes aligned to answer the question. The first theme, challenging experiences as a professional male of color at a PWI, was an overarching theme, describing the challenges experienced by each co-inquirer working at a PWI. The subtheme that emerged from this was the theme of isolation and the feelings experienced by all co-inquirers. The second theme was a lack of professional men of color. Each

co-inquirer spoke about the limited number of other professional men of color, and the subthemes that came from the research were relationships and bridgebuilding. Because of the lack of professional men of color, the subthemes of relationships and bridgebuilding emerged. The importance of developing relationships and building those bridges and connections was expressed by the participants in important subthemes. The second research question asked, "What do Black male faculty describe as the challenges associated with tenure and promotion at selected Predominantly White Institutions in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?" The theme of peers and tenure was found to be a major challenge, and under that theme, the subtheme of tools for success was found. Two other themes, Whiteness and racism, were also found to be major challenges in seeking tenure. Under the theme of Whiteness, one subtheme of workload emerged. Under the theme of racism, one subtheme emerged: coping methods. Coping methods were essential for the co-inquirers facing racism at PWIs and the challenges of seeking tenure. These themes and subthemes answered the research questions for this phenomenological study as explored by me.

Table 5

RQ1 and RQ2 Themes and Subthemes

RQ	Themes	Subthemes
RQ1: How do Black male faculty describe their lived experiences at selected Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?	1.Challengeing experiences as a professional male of color at PWIs	Isolation
	2. Lack of professional men of color	Relationships
		Bridgebuilding
RQ 2: What do Black male faculty describe as the challenges associated with tenure and promotion at selected Predominantly White Institutions in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?	3. Peers and Tenure	Tools for Success
	4. Whiteness	Workload
	5. Racism	Coping Methods

Summary

In Chapter 4, the findings from the studied interviews were conducted with the five Black male faculty members working at PWIs in Texas and Louisiana, giving insight into their lived experiences while seeking tenure and promotion. Each participant gave descriptive testimonies based on their personal journeys and experiences about their tenure and promotion while serving as a PWI. The transcripts from the recorded interviews were utilized to group participant's reports into themes.

Chapter 5 presents conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future studies. The data from this study provides insight into the lived experiences and perspectives of Black male faculty working at PWI in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Florida while seeking

tenure and promotion. Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the findings to exhibit areas that validate the theory and confirm information revealed in the review of the literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to study the essence of the lived experience of Black male faculty seeking tenure at PWIs in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma. This study gives a glimpse from each of the co-inquirer's personal lenses while working at PWIs and attempting to seek tenure or promotion. Each of the co-inquirers in this phenomenological study identified as Black men. Undoubtedly, each participant gave a distinctive account of their personal experiences, which are exceptionally distinguished by each of their experiences, including mine.

This chapter concludes and contains a summary of the study, discussions drawn from the study, implications, and a set of recommendations for future practice, future studies, and final reflections. This transcendental phenomenological approach was used to collect data on the participants' perspectives of their lived experience while working at a PWI. Each of the five participants met face-to-face for interviews on three different occasions. Each participant met all the requirements to participate in this study, including each working at least 3 years at a PWI in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma.

As an African American male who has had some of the same experiences working at PWIs, the phenomenologist had a personal relevance in examining the lens of other African American men who have experienced the same phenomenon. The study features the experience of other African American male professionals working at a PWI in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma while allowing them the space to share their experiences from their personal lens. As the stories were shared by these African American men in higher education, the results from this research will provide additional assistance to HR offices and hiring procedures to retain and promote African American male professionals. Each of the participants shared a

unique glimpse into their lived experience as professionals in higher education and African American men. By examining their experiences in terms of background, difficulties, help, and approaches using their leadership, the phenomenologist hopes to enrich the present condition of the intersectionality of race among African American men in higher education.

Each participant in this study was allowed to answer openly, which then allowed each research question to be answered: "How do Black male faculty describe their lived experiences at selected Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?" and "What do Black male faculty describe as the challenges associated with tenure and promotion at selected Predominantly White Institutions in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma?" The lived experiences shared by these five African American men who seek tenure and promotion at a PWI provide data that the phenomenologist examined. This data guided the phenomenologist in magnifying his present expertise in this phenomenon and offering a voice for the underrepresented African American male professionals in higher education.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature

As the phenomenologist conducted this study, the findings were made available by employing Moustakas's (1994) methodology for a transcendental phenomenological study. In Chapter 4, thorough manuscripts can be found with specified findings; moreover, the following sections outline a short summary of the discoveries according to the themes that emerged following data analysis and answers to the research question that this study projected to answer.

Themes

The following five themes surfaced of importance during the data analysis process of this transcendental phenomenological study:

- Experiences as a professional male of color at a PWI

- Peers and Tenure
- Whiteness
- Racism
- Lack of professional men of color

Additionally, several subthemes surfaced of importance during the data analysis process of this transcendental phenomenological study:

- Isolation
- Bridgebuilding
- Tools for Success
- Coping Methods
- Relationships
- Workload

Critical Race Theory

To increase knowledge and to have a stronger discernment, the phenomenologist used CRT in this transcendental inquiry, in which this study's framework is centered around the concept that microaggressions are directed at marginalized people (Harris & Linder, 2018). Previously, scholars have also linked CRT as a guided tool to articulate marginalized people of color's experiences. It allows scholars to help educate others on the environment of people of color by studying race, discrimination, and societal issues (Mendez & Mendez, 2018). In other studies, CRT is the most commonly helpful framework to describe discrimination, Whiteness, racism, and race in higher education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Challenging Experiences as a Professional Male of Color at a PWI

CRT's need is to urge other critical race activists to apply intentional focus to dominant groups, first-hand experience of people of color, and the resistance to change the differences in power and dominant groups (Gillborn, 2015) with limited attention drawn to the disparities that Black male faculty face, it is stated that the challenges with retaining Black male faculty are not feeling supported, mentoring relationships, isolation, and racial discrimination (Muñoz et al., 2023). Co-inquirer 4 added:

> I think if I'd had a mentor, maybe I would've had a clearer understanding of what path I wanted to pursue. Perhaps things would've been a little bit different but easier, and I wouldn't have been stressed out while trying to figure it all out on my understanding. Having a mentor would've allowed me to pursue my chosen path with a guide to walk me through the journey. I mentioned earlier that there are less than a dozen Black male professionals at any level at this particular university. There is a total of three of us, and we often share and discuss many of the experiences we have in common. They regularly echo the same frustrations that I have. It can be a lot when you add it up. It's being left out, not having a seat at the table, and seen as less than.

Co-inquirer 3 added:

> I always say it's tricky because you have the best intentions of doing your best, but you must be mindful of your spaces. You have pure intentions of using your voice for men of color since you have a seat at the table. It's important to be weary that many of your colleagues possibly have a lingering perception of what they imagine Black males to be like. They have limited interaction with people of color in these professional spaces, and that's where the trickiness comes up.

Peers and Tenure

The small number of Black male faculty members in academia has difficulty gaining support, including legal challenges, discrimination, lack of recognition, policies, and procedures, discrimination in pay, representation in leadership, and psychological defeat about tenure and promotion despite PWIs declaration to commit to diversity and inclusion (Puplampu et al., 2023). The harsh reality for Black faculty shown in previous studies is the lack of mentors to coach and share experiences from conducting research, teaching, and gaining access to external funds, which have been noted to be a contingency for tenure and promotion (Puplampu et al., 2023). Co-inquirer 2 added:

> The academy is retaliatory; you know what I mean? I'm going to stand my ground, and I won't be bullied by anybody. I will not sit here and watch other people get bullied and not speak up. Most people are comfortable sitting back and not doing anything, or they think that standing up for themselves would muddy the waters. I've taken things as far as filing a retaliation and discrimination complaint against my department chair and director on the basis of gender and race. I've said it once, and I'll say it again: I can't do anti-racist work, I can't do anti-oppressive work, and stay silent.

Co-inquirer 3 added:

> There needs to be real talk about what higher education is before they get into it. I've got a team of recruiters, including a young Black male and a Hispanic male. We've had talks about code-switching and respectability politics. We've had talks about what that looks like, and I want to make sure that I approached that in a way that they'll understand what it looks like and have some tools that they'll need to be able to employ to be able to navigate the system as well as the next system you get into. Whatever professional

> system you're going into afterward. Make sure that they understand that even in higher education when you look around, there are not a lot of people here who look like us.

Whiteness

The work of Ledesma and Calderón (2015) stated that applying CRT in higher education sheds light on the ongoing policies and procedures that empower White privilege and Whiteness. Also noted in Ledesma and Calderón (2015), scholars have done a great deal of laying the foundation to cross-examine racial environments for people of color, admissions practices, and colorblindness. Whiteness can be a privileged and selective class that harvests benefits and protected traditions (Gillborn, 2015). To understand these rankings within the White class, CRT explains White supremacy as standard policies that structure the world in White people's interests (Gillborn, 2015). All inquirers in this phenomenological inquiry had at least 3 years of experience serving at a PWI in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma. Each of the co-inquirers mentioned the advantages of Whiteness while serving at a PWI. Each co-inquirer expressed the benefits of Whiteness amongst men of color and how it has shaped their lens on their overall experience.

Co-inquirer 4 added:

> You might have this DEI statement, and that's maybe doing some workshops, but you're not practicing that on campus. You still have an entire executive team made up of predominantly White individuals. You still have classroom settings that are comprised of entirely predominantly White individuals. You still have all of those prevailing notions in all of those different things that come along with these White institutions. So, I think that's really where it comes from, not having those voices at PWIs. There needs to be some serious systematic changes if you're serious about DEI, and serious about

> embracing diversity, serious about serving your Black men. I think it's tough to be able to thrive in any professional setting in general whenever you're a Black person amongst other non-Black people. It makes it a lot harder to get simple things done just because of microaggressions. We're not being taken seriously, and we're not being able to be invited for certain things just because of whatever reason.

Co-inquirer 2 added:

> You'll get asked to do all these things related to diversity. These PWIs are assigned to get into diversity and inclusion for millions of years, or hundreds of years later than they should be, but yay. They're all on this bandwagon of diversity committees and justice and all of this stuff. They'll ask you to be on it, and it is a seat filler to say that they have diversity on the committee, but it's not oftentimes to get your opinion or professional feedback or added value, so you'd be quiet sometimes.

Racism

Racism and discrimination are ingrained in our society and throughout the nation, and critical race theorists dispute that it is supported and hidden in normalcy (Gillborn, 2015). The impact of racism is not always defined so easily. Racialized events happen on PWI campuses, and scholars have called for the need to dismantle and dislocate the status quo that reinforces racist interactions and White ideologies (Briscoe & Jones, 2022). Co-inquirer 5 added:

> I have to personally check myself because I used to just throw hands with anybody and everybody at the drop of a dime because that was the only way that I knew how to make myself heard. I have to take it with me every day, especially in those moments when someone calls me ‘boy.’

Co-inquirer 4 added:

> It's the staff that thought they were the privileged folk. With a lot of the Whites, you always had to prove yourself. You will never get enough. They were not inclusive at all, but enough to feel it. You have to have a strong purpose and look past a lot of stuff, knowing that you're there to make a difference.

Lack of Professional Men of Color

When examining the reality of the lack of professional men of color, research shows us that there is a leak in the pipeline. Research shows that experiences of professional men of color often experience devaluing and are embedded with microaggressions and rigorous workloads that discourage them from seeking employment in educational settings or attempting to pursue a doctorate (Grier & Poole, 2020). The conversation of leaky pipes comes into consideration due to numerous minority candidates being eliminated through a series of struggles for academic roles years ahead of their time to apply for faculty positions (Grier & Poole, 2020). Co-inquirer 5 added:

> We've only got a couple of African Americans here. The others don't see the whole Brown versus White thing. They don't see the connection that Blacks identified with other Blacks because even when I was recruiting and doing academic advising, when Blacks would come in, they would just gravitate to me. I didn't have to go seeking them. They sought me and asked if I felt more comfortable. I think it's important to see and have professional men of color on these campuses. The benefit is that when you have people of color, in this case, other students, coming in, they're able to relate to them.

Co-inquirer 3 added:

> You've got to imagine that some of these people haven't interacted with Black men in a professional space in these organizations. Those interactions or first impressions are

> lasting, and they may linger on to how they interact with other Black men in professional spaces. People are like, 'I have Black friends,' but we can all be different. They have little interaction with us.

Isolation

Black male faculty members work hard to create a healthy work environment for themselves while being expected to work harder and prove their credibility, which is often questioned (Puplampu et al., 2023). Although there is not a large pool of data on Black academia for a PWI, there is proof that Black male faculty are underrepresented in comparison to the consistent growth in Black students who also are underrepresented in the classroom and leadership roles (Puplampu et al., 2023). Co-inquirer 3 added:

> I think it can be tricky at times. They think I know everything about being a Black man; we all think the same, which is not the case. You can be considered to represent all of the people that look like you. We know that seems to be the case, but we're not all the same. We're very different or unique. Oftentimes, they will look at me for certain things that are geared toward diversity or people of color. Also, being brave enough, I guess, to bring up color and diversity if it is being overlooked.

Co-inquirer 4 added:

> I didn't know there were any Black deans, Black provosts, presidents, or vice presidents. You know, I'm just like, wow. At the first conference I went to with the Texas Association of Black personnel and higher education, I was in awe by sitting around Black people who were intelligent, smart, doctors, brothers, and sisters who poured themselves into education.

Bridgebuilding

The few studies that discuss the importance of having Black male faculty state that their existence on campus provides an influential climate, availability for other Black men to have mentorship, and student retention (Henry, 2021). Other key factors in having Black male faculty at PWIs include students of color's interactions with professors and their development (Henry, 2021).

Co-inquirer 5 added:

> This is something that I had to do. I always knew I needed to go to college. Education was always a focus for me. I think not having representation in those areas makes people who don't see themselves in those positions feel they'll really be able to do any of it. They don't have somebody who looks like me in those roles to show them the way or, even more importantly, show that there's more than one way to be successful. For somebody that is a young Black male, that is someone they can identify with.

Co-inquirer 1 added:

> On one level, I think representation matters. Secondly, just so people can see another Black man in higher education. I think there is a psychological benefit to that. I'm not Obama but seeing him in the White House did something psychologically for people to see a Black family.

Tools for Success

White privilege and Whiteness remain dominant forces in the world of education, societal norms, and everyday experiences. According to the statistics, White men and women hold advantageous positions of power in higher education than people of color (Bhopal, 2020). This is why professional men of color must have the tools to succeed in predominantly White spaces.

According to a study by DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2020), participants spoke about how they often kept quiet in past situations but found that they could confront racism by opening up a dialogue channel, which ultimately helped reduce their stress. Many African American professionals found it convenient to have support groups that helped them navigate through comparable experiences (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). Co- inquirer 1 stated,

> You have to know who you are and be grounded in a space or community outside the university because if you are not, the university has a culture and a life of its own, and it's easy for you to get sucked up in it. I also think that having clarity of purpose for why you are there sometimes causes your clarity, and your purpose could be antithetical and in opposition to the university. I think it's often revisiting your value system, making sure this is what it is, and living into those values. Surround yourself with people who celebrate you and not just tolerate you.

Co-inquirer 5 added:

> Man, if you're going to work in a PWI, you've got to have a strong support group, you've got to have a strong purpose, and you need to have a strong calling. Having all that while still needing to be able to overlook a whole lot of things, knowing that you should be there is the only thing that matters.

Coping Methods

All five participants discussed various stressors, experiences with racism, and challenges they experienced, as well as ways they coped. Using CRT as a framework, the importance of needing coping methods stems from the variable of Whiteness that structures PWIs and ultimately benefits Whites as the majority in higher education, leading professional men of color to feel negative feelings and need helpful methods of coping (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Liera,

2020). Previous research showed that many faculty members reported inner conflict over confronting racial issues or aggressors, questioning if there would be any change or if it would yield any positive results (Louis et al., 2016). Co-inquirer 3 stated,

> Knowing who you are and why you are there. You have to have a solid understanding of the mission at hand and stay centered on that. A lot of things can annoy you, and there's a whole bunch of bull shit, but you can't focus on that and forget why you are there. As I said, some of it is important to address, but often, I just brush it off. I try to be mindful of what battles I'm willing to take on and what battles don't matter.

Co-inquirer 2 added:

> There are a lot of ways that I've coped. Black women have been amazing to me. I mean that in the sense of resources, there are a few brothers here, but the majority of them have been supportive and have positive connections. I also write a lot. It's therapeutic and also helps forewarn and foreshadow other people.

Workload

Black faculty have reported feeling heftier workloads than their White counterparts, which slows down their advancement and tenure (Allison, 2008). According to Allison (2008), Black faculty are enthusiastic to begin working towards tenure, but tenured faculty fail to assist Black faculty in adapting, learning, and incorporating the institution's policies accompanied by extra requirements put onto Black faculty.

Co-inquirer 1 stated:

> I came here as the first ever, duly appointed faculty member in the Center for African American Studies as well as Criminology, and I was excited about that… They sold it to me in the interview, like I was going to have support, and it was going to be amazing.

> And I got here, and they lied. They lied. It started right away. They hated the fact that I would constantly be requested to give keynotes and different things. I earned my merit increase because I worked my ass off. They're going to tell you that you need to do x, y, and z. This is why we brought you here, to do this, this, and that. You get asked to do all things related to diversity. They are all on this bandwagon of diversity committees and justice, and they will ask you to be on it, and it's a seat filler.

Co-inquirer 3 stated:

> So, it's like I'm here to do one thing, but now I'm serving in all of these different capacities…. I call it Black Tax because I do not know what the term for it is. It is a tag. That's like the space where there are few Black people, so when we get into those tenured positions, they tend to ask us to do a lot more. The extra stuff that comes along with us being few in that space. We're taxed at a higher rate than maybe other people.

Relationships

The mentoring relationship can serve many factors to professionals. One of the commonly known recommendations for retaining Black male faculty is mentoring (Muñoz et al., 2023). Mentoring can have many benefits and pathways for professionals. The relationship from mentoring provides immediate access to expertise, comfort, sponsorship, and career coaching (Muñoz et al., 2023). Different forms of mentorship can include colleagues and friends outside of the work setting; However, partnered with the right mentoring relationship, it has advantages to help the mentee succeed in their progress toward tenure and promotion (Muñoz et al., 2023).

Co-inquirer 5 added:

> Relationships are important because you have people that once they recognize or identify with someone that looks like them, in this case, a man of color, other students and

professionals are able to relate to them. Even when I went to the Texas Association of Black Personnel and Higher Education conference, I didn't know that there were deans, provosts, and vice presidents who looked like me. These are everyday brothers and sisters' man, but they're smart and intelligent. You get them in front of a room, and they immediately begin to start talking about issues and solving problems. These brothers and sisters were deep. I believe that for these relationships to happen on the campuses of PWIs, they have to allow relationships to be built so that they reflect and open up to everyone, and then everyone can feel welcome. I call it the LA factor. The two things people need are needing to be loved, and everybody wants to be loved for who they are. Another thing is acceptance, which comes when people feel that they know that they tend to accelerate in knowing they can be themselves.

Co-inquirer 4 added:

Relationships really matter, whether it's faculty building relationships amongst peers or students building relationships with faculty. In my professional career, I haven't been able to build relationships like I did as a student. As a student with some of the relationships I built with faculty, if assignments were given, you just knew you had to be prepared. It was a sense of respect but also knowing there was no nonsense tolerated when it came to getting your work done. It was a space that you were proud to do in the community of peers, in a space that was somewhat safe. Where you could see yourself and your faculty, see yourself in administration, and see yourself in your peers. No matter what college you were in, you saw yourself everywhere and created a sense of belonging and acceptance for the most part. In those experiences, you look for professional work.

You look for ways to build harness and harvest community amongst your peers, even if they're not all Black. It means being able to find a space that is comfortable for you to exist in and be your best version of yourself. Since working in higher education, I cannot say that I have witnessed students or faculty having those experiences while working at a PWI. In the majority of White spaces, particularly at college, a lot of the stakeholders and people are often excluded from that conversation; they exclude the graduate students and take school faculty members from the specific spaces as uninviting for any Black person. You can trust that it is probably uninviting for all of them.

Limitations

The study was limited to the experiences and perceptions of five professional men of color seeking tenure at PWIs in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, and Oklahoma. The study first solely focused on Texas, but due to the limited numbers of Black men seeking tenure at PWIs, the study was expanded to Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, and Oklahoma. Because there was a smaller geographical location, the study's results may not apply to professional men of color in other locations across the United States due to the differences in each state. Another limitation was that the population only included men, so the findings cannot be generalized to all faculty of color, including women and those who identify as non-binary. Another limitation of the study was the method used by the phenomenologist. The phenomenologist used a transcendental phenomenological inquiry, interviewing five participants, but using a quantitative approach could be a method to help bolster the results of the study. Lastly, the phenomenologist bias could be a limitation. I used bracketing to reduce bias on any prior experiences or beliefs about professional men of color at PWIs, and member checking was employed to prevent any personal

bias. It is crucial to avoid bias so that the phenomenologist can remove him or herself from the study to gain clear insight into the participants' lived experiences.

Implications

This transcendental phenomenological study focused on the lived experiences of professional men of color at PWIs in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, and Oklahoma has the potential to benefit other professionals working in higher education. The findings of this study were consistent with similar research that focused on diversity in higher education and faculty of color (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Hannon et al., 2019; Louis et al., 2016). The results of this study could help improve the complex workings and understanding of why there is a lack of men of color seeking tenure in higher education, not just in the southern states but nationwide, as only two percent of Black men and women account for full professors and three percent associate professors (Snyder et al., 2018). The results of this study support the current research that faculty of color are experiencing racism, isolation, and a lack of professional men of color working towards tenure at PWIs (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Liera, 2020). The results of this study also support the variable of Whiteness in university structures, as Whiteness was a theme found in the interviews (Liera, 2020). The results of this study also imply challenges faced by professional men of color at PWI and offer more discussion as to how to create more equity and equality within PWI as well as the importance of developing relationship and coping skills (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Louis et al., 2016).

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the results of this phenomenological study, there are several practice recommendations. The first recommendation for practice would be to create more diversity and inclusion training for hiring departments. Additional training must be provided on recruiting,

hiring, and retaining faculty of color and correcting discriminatory hiring practices. Many universities have acknowledged the lack of diversity among faculty; however, there are still many areas of improvement (Hannon et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2015; O'Meara et al., 2020). Another recommendation for practice is establishing opportunities for mentoring. Based on the themes of isolation and bridge building, connecting, and having opportunities for connection and mentorship is vital to faculty of color. Past research has shown that many Black faculty members can adopt maladaptive coping skills when faced with racism and other negative experiences; however, those who develop a mentorship often feel less isolation and a stronger connection to help address issues or concerns (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Mazerolle et al., 2018). Another recommendation for practice is to help provide additional funding to faculty of color to participate in associations or organizations. Many faculty are provided some types of stipends to help create connections, reduce isolation, and increase tools for success. Many faculty of color are very cognizant of the variable of Whiteness that runs throughout higher education and shapes the ideology and structure of the university to benefit Whites as the majority (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Liera, 2020). This is why it would be essential to help fund faculty of color so they could join and participate in organizations or conferences that specifically support faculty of color in their professional development. Universities could provide opportunities for funding or grants to help faculty members pay for memberships or conferences to help develop or enhance tools for success working at a PWI.

Recommendations for Research

Based on the findings from this phenomenological study, I made the following recommendations for research. These recommendations may be insightful for expanding the

inquiry of the experiences of professional men of color seeking tenure at PWIs in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Oklahoma, and Georgia:

1. Future research could expand the geographical locations. Researchers could focus on all Southeastern states or expand throughout the United States.
2. Another recommendation for future research could be to examine the type of PWI, whether it was a private or public institution. This type of study could produce results that show inequities that could exist between private and public institutions.
3. Future research could include women of color seeking tenure at PWIs in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Oklahoma, and Georgia. This could provide a different element of diversity and inclusion and highlight additional issues women of color face.
4. Further research could include qualitative or mixed methods research. Using a qualitative or mixed method approach would provide different types of data to help gain a richer understanding and help increase the credibility and validity of the research study.
5. Further research could also expand to student of color and their relationships or lack of relationships with faculty of color. This could provide a different element of the isolation or racism experienced on campus for students and faculty.

Conclusions

This transcendental phenomenological inquiry aimed to gain knowledge and understanding of the lived experiences of professional men of color seeking tenure at PWI in Texas, Oklahoma, Georgia, Florida, and Louisiana. Despite the true essence of any phenomenon not being completely transferable, the compilation of interviews, textual descriptions, themes, and subthemes substantially represented the experiences of professional men of color seeking tenure at PWIs in Texas, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, and Louisiana.

This study helped support current studies and research that show the lack of diverse faculty across the United States and help fill in the gaps in research on professional men of color seeking tenure at PWIs. Black men seeking tenure at PWIs are already small in numbers and often find themselves in hostile environments, which makes this study so crucial for having representation and a voice. This study has given a strong voice to professional men of color working at PWIs, which historically has been quieted as well as in the state of Texas, the current administration has taken further steps to silence any diversity and inclusion efforts at public institutions, passing a bill that ceased all DEI offices and initiatives for publicly funded universities in 2023 (Texas Senate Bill 17, 2023).

As I started this journey, I searched and asked many men of color to participate in my study, and there was one man who replied that he was scared of what this study would find, which spoke volumes to me of the importance of this work. This man chose not to participate out of fear. However, I am thankful for the participant's willingness to speak truthfully and boldly about their lived experiences and the phenomenon of being a professional male of color seeking tenure at PWI.

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Appendix A: Codebook

Colors for coding	Theme	Sub Theme	First pass	Second Pass
Pink	Peers and Tenure	Tools for Success and Bridge Building	297	141
Green	Experiences	Isolation	233	112
Purple	Lack of professional men of color		55	27
Orange	Racism	Coping Methods and Relationships	110	54
Yellow	Whiteness		94	46

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Date:

Dear Participant,

My name is Chris Frazier, and I am a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University. I am working on my dissertation research, examining the lived experience of Black male faculty members at predominately white institutions in Texas. I am asking for your voluntary participation in the study. The interviews will address your perception of your personal experience in this role.

Each participant will be interviewed three times. All three interviews will be done via Zoom. The interviews will be recorded, and notes will be taken. The recordings will be transcribed, and the transcription copy will be given to the participant to review and verify. If you decide to participate in the study, the participants' names and affiliations will be changed and will remain confidential to protect their identity. Your experience as an African American male professional and your insights on your lived experience will help me conduct my study, and your participation would be sincerely valued. If you have any questions about this study, you can email your concerns to my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Jeff Cranmore.

Sincerely,

Christopher Frazier

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

First Interview:

The first interview will start with a brief introduction between the researcher and the participant. The researcher will then provide an explanation of his role, the reasoning behind the study, and a brief narration of the researcher's background. The research will develop a rapport with each participant to form trust on a personal level with authentic conversation.

Hello, my name is (interviewer name), and first, I would personally like to acknowledge you for making time in your busy schedule to speak with me today. Following up on our previous communication, my study is concentrated on pinpointing and understanding every deficiency regarding the lack of professional men of color at PWIs. Before we start the interview, do you have any questions regarding the consent form you completed and turned in?

Sounds good; if you don't mind, let me give you a brief rundown about myself. Since 2015, I have had the pleasure of working in primary, secondary education, and higher education. The first job I held was as a coordinator of after-school programs, where I created after-school curricula for student enrichment for elementary schools throughout the district. My second position was Director of Summer Camps at East Texas Baptist University, where I was honored to work alongside my mentor and peers. Currently, my main focus is to complete my doctoral studies while raising my newborn son. My short time working in education has had a tremendous impact on how I go about building a bridge for those coming behind me. Is there anything you want to ask me or possibly share? Over the next few days, I'll be in touch to make sure I have correctly recorded your story.

Second Interview:

The second interview starts with an accuracy check of the information provided in the previous interview and follows the second interview. Depending on the analysis of the data composed from the first interview, additional questions can be reviewed for transparency.

For starters:

1. Could you give me a brief history about yourself?
2. (Follow up with a reactive question to help establish rapport.)
3. Could you share with me what encouraged you to work in higher education?
4. Tell me about the roles in which you served in higher education.
5. Share with me about your experiences as a professional male of color at PWIs.
6. As a professional male of color, did you have any mentors?

Before continuing, do you have any questions for me? If not, I want to respect your time and continue.

1. What would best describe your purpose for serving in a PWI?
2. In your words, what type of relationships did you have amongst your peers? From your experiences, what would you deem essential for professional males of color seeking success at a PWI?
3. We both are aware that higher education has been around for some time now. What purpose do PWIs serve? Who does it impact more, students or faculty/staff?
4. What have been some of your reliable coping strategies for dealing with microaggressions?
5. For the purpose of my study, would you say that you see a lack of professional men of color in higher education? Would the response be the same for PWIs and HBCUs?

Once again, thank you for making time in your schedule to visit with me. I've asked you all the questions I have.

Third Interview:

For the accuracy of data collection, questions will be determined from data produced on analysis of the replies from the second interview. The third interview will start with a check of the data accuracy provided by the participants from interviews two and three. Lastly, determining the analysis of data retrieved from the second interview will assist in creating additional interpretation.