A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF WOMEN-OF-COLOR PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the WOC in higher education (and elsewhere) whose stories rarely are told. Thank you for allowing me to bear witness to and learn from your experiences. I remain in awe of what you endure and what you give as professionals and women in this world. May this dissertation serve as thanks to you, for without you this study and advising work could not be done.

To my family of strong Black women and girls, those I have been blessed with by birth and by choice, I dedicate the entirety of my work. Had it not been for every single one of you sacrificing, listening, supporting, and loving me through this process (and this life) in some way, I would not have made it this far. My gratitude is but a drop in the ocean and I will spend the rest of my life thanking you in word and deed.

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[1] Nibling is a gender-neutral term used to refer to a sibling's child (plural: niblings).

ABSTRACT

ELIA TAMPLIN

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF WOMEN-OF-COLOR PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

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Within higher education institutions and research, Women-of-Color's (WOC) professional experiences have become more visible. Yet, the lived experiences of WOC professional academic advisors working in colleges and universities are missing from the literature. WOC advisors are vital to student success as they are mentors, teachers, guides, cheerleaders, stand-in parental figures, role models, and advocates. As well, they are important because they contribute to serving as a mediator and bridge in higher education conversations around supporting and affirming Students of Color. Perhaps uncovering their stories and learning how they can be better supported will allow them to better thrive in their roles on campus and in higher education. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore and make visible the lives and experiences of WOC advisors, while expanding understandings of WOC experiences within the university as a whole.

This phenomenological study, inspired by critical-feminist/womanist epistemologies and intersectionality, consists of semi-structured interviews with nine Women-of-Color professional academic advisors. Results contribute significantly to past research that examines the experiences of WOC in the Ivory tower. As well, the results introduce a more focused look at Advisor of Color experiences within academic advising.

More specifically, this study contributes detailed information on Women-of-Color professional academic advisors and their experiences, information that can be used to make recommendations that guide advising and institutional best practices and policy.

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INTRODUCTION

Prologue

One could easily say I was born into advising. Born to a Black woman professional academic advisor in the early nineties, you could say that advising is in my blood. At the intersections of Black womanhood, academic working-class status, and in many ways primary parenthood, my mother often had no choice but to take her three girls to most work events. Placing us in other rooms, she encouraged us to engage with supplemental educational resources and finish our homework until we were old enough to start helping set up programs, pass out papers, and meet her students.

My mother has been an advisor for 39 years. Her journey as an advisor, moving from a TRIO advisor to general academic advisor to varying associate directorships, parallels my own journey of transitioning academically (K-24) and physically (Black girl to Black transmyn). In 24 of my 28 years alive, I have borne witness to my mother at work in what could be understood as four stages: “Black girl intrigued”, “Black young woman witnessing”, “Black woman knowing”, and “Black transmyn witnessing, knowing, counseling, and even more intrigued and in awe” of my academic advising mother. That is to say, across my span of development, I have watched my mother’s uncanny – and seemingly superhuman – ability to form lasting relationships with students of varied identities in less than 45-minute sessions. I have witnessed students come visit

her to share about their grades, their partners, their parents, their hopes and dreams, their challenges and failures. I have had her students tease that "she's my mama now" while they worked hard to avoid her colleagues. Current and former students have greeted me singing my mother's praises and telling how she contributed to their success. I have heard about and witnessed students re-surfacing on my mother's radar (e.g.,, Facebook or at a conference) after graduation and experiencing life still thanking her for help in their educational processes. She has this effect on most colleagues too.

Yet, for all the success my mother has had as a Black woman in higher education – and in advising, specifically – I learned, too, of the challenges and barriers that came with such fulfilling work. You know the saying, "Black girls/women have to learn early the necessity and value of working twice as hard and being twice as smart while being seen as twice as incompetent and incapable?" This lesson came early to me in Stages One and Two ("Black girl intrigued" and "Black young woman witnessing") in the form of survival stories. Surviving the lack of resources while giving students everything you have; surviving alienation, marginalization, isolation, discrimination, and cultural taxation; surviving the impact of students' personal barriers and challenges; surviving as a Black, academic working to middle class mother/wife then a Black, homeless single mother and then a Black working class single mother with three grown kids and grandchildren. Survival is the name of the game, a fact increasingly visible to me as I and our relationship develop and evolve.

The first time these stories took on a new meaning was when I switched from witness to sounding board ("Black woman knowing"). Entering my own higher education journey as a Black lesbian woman meant forming my own complexly similar stories and strategies of survival, particularly as I sought a Master's in Higher Education while picking up internships and graduate assistantships in advising and coaching – all the while being surrounded by other Black women. I was able to understand the stories of my mother and other Black women close to me in new ways (thanks, experiential knowledge!). In this space, we became mutual sounding boards, providing one another support through morning calls, venting sessions, flyer creations, brainstorming meetings, and more.

The second time these stories took on new meanings has been through my journey through my doctoral research as a Women's and Gender Studies scholar. Armed with theoretical understandings of higher education and feminist theories – embodied knowledge provided by my experiences as Black girl, Black woman, and Black transmyn – and the stories and experiences of Black women advisors in my life, I have gained a better understanding of the ways in which difference and structures of power, privilege, and inequity worked in these stories. Now our conversations consider social justice and access and calling out injustice, while also attending to our planning and venting and laughing and crying.

I remain in awe of the stories of Black women; however, I experience relative distance from stories I once "knew" intimately as I have gained unearned advantage (and

anxieties) that come with perceived Black maleness. Regardless (and, maybe, because) of this body, the pursuit remains the same: elevate and center the stories of Black women who are continually silenced, overlooked, and erased, so that their voices may be heard and their liberation may be had.

This journey from Black girlhood to Black transmynhood, watching and listening closely to my mother and my home girls' stories and experiencing my own, has led me to seriously contemplate Black women advisors' experiences (and mine) in the world of academic advising. Entering a Multicultural Women's and Gender Studies program expanded these musings and drove my exploration of the lived experiences of Women-of-Color (WOC) professional academic advisors in public colleges and universities. It is in this space that I hope to capture the stories and the underlying assumptions and meanings that WOC accord to their experiences.

Background

Established in the 1600s, the United States' (U.S.) higher education system is a racialized, gendered, and classed site that mirrors the larger U.S. society's in its history of inequity, marginalization, and oppression. Today, such systems remain unusually "chilly" for WOC (WOC), individuals who experience continued inequality and oppression at the intersections of racial and gender oppressions. WOC experience work and school differently than their White[2], male counterparts. The body of literature in the fields of

[2] The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) outlines several stylistic decisions that scholars should make to demonstrate respect to research participants. According to the manual, scholars should capitalize racialized terms such as

higher education, psychology, sociology, and women's and gender studies (to name a few) show that, regardless of institutional location, WOC's experiences are compounded by racism and sexism (Collins, 2000). Consequently, they face additional stress and pressures, including racism, sexism, and unique incidents of gendered racism associated with their multiple marginalized identities, all which compound their experiences (Alexander-Lee, 2014; Alfred, 2005; Gomes, 2016; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-James, 2011; Ka'opua, 2013; Medina & Luna, 2000; Sulé, 2009). However, the available literature is limited to the experiences of WOC students, faculty, and administrators' perspectives.

Academic advising, however, does not escape this problem. In fact, the history of academic advising, almost as old as the history of higher education, is well documented (Cook, 2009; Frost, 2000; Gillispie, 2003; Harrison, 2009; Kuhn, 2008). Though scholars have noted the organizational differences across the field of advising, the oppressive history and functional components of higher education influence all academic advising spaces, policies, and practices. Increasingly aware of advising's ties to larger oppressive systems, some advising scholars explore the experiences of Students of Color and

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White, Black, and Brown because, like other racial/ethnic group designations, these Blackterms are proper nouns (2010). Further, we must acknowledge that language matters when we think about power and who is legitimate. Therefore, I resist the notion of capitalizing the "W" in White while lowercasing the "b" in Black as I believe such a move contributes to White Supremacy. I also opt against the common move in some social justice writing to capitalize the "B" in Black while making the "w" in White lowercased. While I understand (and support) the resistance and empowerment expressed by the latter option, I also believe in a liberatory vision where all are visible, all are legitimate, and all are free. Using parallel construction when discussing varying racial/ethnic groups is a stylistic move that aligns with my anti-oppression, Black feminist/Womanist epistemology.

Advisors of Color[3] alike (Henderson, 1986; Kim, 2014; Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005; Mitchell, Wood, & Witherspoon, 2010; Museus & Neville, 2012; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Museus & Quaye, 2009). However, the literature has yet to explore fully the perspectives and experiences of WOC serving as academic advisors. The goal of this qualitative phenomenological study is to offer an understanding of WOC academic advisors' experiences and to fill in the gap in existing scholarship about WOC in higher education and academic advisors.

Problem Statement

Regrettably, current quantitative data does not yield information about the racial/ethnic makeup of professional academic advisors or the number of WOC employed in academic advising positions. While the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) reports from 2010 to 2016 yield the demographics of its members, the data is not generalizable for several reasons. First, faculty, administrators, students, and professional advisors comprise the NACADA membership. Second, not all professional advisors are members of NACADA. Third, scholars often treat (and display) data on race/ethnicity and gender as discrete statuses. Due to this either/or logic, data about WOC is not easily accessible. However, I believe we can know a great deal about a field by looking at its professional organization.

[3] Following critical race scholars, I elected to capitalize the phrases Students of Color (SOC), Advisors of Color, Faculty of Color, and other related phrases. Such phrases are collective group racial designations that denote unity and solidarity and reposition and reaffirm the experiences, realities, and bodies of these groups within the (still) White, male dominated context of higher education.

Given the available data, NACADA is overwhelmingly White and female. Further, the research produced for and about the field is primarily written by White, male scholars and focuses on the history of and issues in advising, advising practices and models, and student perspectives of advisors. One resulting gap: WOC advisors' voices and experiences mirror the dearth of WOC voices and experiences across higher education systems—particularly at predominantly White colleges and universities.

While neither organizational data nor research speak to the experiences of WOC advisors, general research on WOC in higher education continually, and persuasively, reveal all-too-common themes of discrimination and marginalization that befall WOC faculty and administrators as systems of power play out both inside and outside the classroom (San Antonio, 2015; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Turner et al., 2008). Feminist of Color scholars contend that WOC not only have experiences distinct from their White male counterparts, but also from Men of Color (MOC) and White women (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, & White, 2014). At the site of such difference(s), and the consequences that accompany them, the undue stress and pressure experienced by WOC often means increases in susceptibility to illness, dis-ease, burnout, and attrition (Vakalahi & Starks, 2011).

Within the walls of traditionally oppressive institutions of higher education, WOC advisors do not receive similar access to privilege and power as their White and male counterparts. As institutional agents, WOC advisors also experience lesser access to privilege and power than their WOC faculty and administrative counterparts. However, to

stop there would limit WOC's experiences and agency. Centering WOC advisors, those who sit at the intersections of social and professional margins, opens up the possibilities for more (nuanced) insights about WOC's experiences in a traditionally oppressive system that (still) cannot handle its race, gender, and class problem. In attempts to gain understanding about such experiences, the primary question guiding this exploratory study is: "What are the lived experiences of WOC professional advisors at two-year and four-year public colleges and universities?"

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover WOC professional academic advisors' experiences and promote understanding of their unique lived experiences. Studies show that WOC across the institution are face unique challenges and barriers due to multiple marginalized identities. Literature in the field of higher education, specifically, also shows that WOC remain resilient and have the ability to transform their peers, students, and institutions (Huang, 2012; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011). However, the literature has not yet focused solely on the experiences of professional academic advisors. Thus, guided by the lens of intersectionality, my aim is to uncover how WOC describe their experiences in academic advising. As a guiding framework, intersectionality facilitates my understanding of how ALANA[4] women's identities (and their accompanying oppressions) intersect and overlap to create unique and varying

[4] ALANA is an acronym that refers to African, Latinx, Asian, and Native Americans. The acronym is used interchangeably with People of Color (POC) and related terms.

experiences of social inequality that shape their experiences and how they are experienced by others (Crenshaw, 1989/1991; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Focusing on the experiences of an understudied, marginalized group in a fringe field—WOC in the field of advising—helps scholars develop an understanding of unique experiences that are often excluded in elitist, Eurocentric, patriarchal narratives of higher education that often prioritize faculty, administration, and staff and affluent White male ways of knowing. By centering WOC voices, scholars experience what (new) knowledge emerges when WOC define themselves for themselves and discuss their own stories (hooks, 1984; Stanley, 2006). Further, scholars challenge dominant narratives and "status quo" thinking (Keating, 2012) by centering ALANA voices. WOC advisors' stories thereby provide higher educational and advising audiences with more insight into experiences that are often overlook or misunderstood.

Key Concepts Defined

This section provides key terms and definitions used in the context of this study.

Women of Color (WOC)

The term *Women of Color* (WOC) has long political and ideological histories. Reproductive justice activist, Loretta Ross, explains that the term "WOC" was born of Black women's activism during the late 1970s. In 1977, a group of Black women from Washington D.C., known as the Black Women's Agenda, traveled to the National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas, to present a Black woman's *plank* – plan of action – that would address their concerns. Ross (2011) described how the group created

their own plank after learning that the organizers of the conference had reduced their needs and concerns to an unsatisfactory three-page "Minority Women's Plank" within a 200-page document entitled *The Spirit of Houston*. On their way to the conference, the Black Women's Agenda was met by non-Black WOC who saw commonalities between their concerns and the concerns of the Black women. After much deliberation about how to merge the concerns of all parties, the group settled on the term *Women of Color* as a "solidarity definition, a commitment to work in collaboration with other oppressed WOC who have been 'minoritized' (Ross, 2011). For Ross and others (see: *This Bridge Called My Back*), the power of the term lies in the radical and empowering act of self-naming and moving from "primitive ethnic claiming" (Ross, 2011) based on biological determinism to a collective political space of solidarity and social justice-oriented action for minoritized individuals. Thus, while the term primarily applies to women who identify as non-White and/or as having non-European heritage, its power is located in the recognition of WOC's shared struggles against erasure, violence, silencing, and exploitation, where power differentials exist (in most contexts).

Within the academy, WOC scholars have continually argued that identities and structures of power intersect in complex and dynamic ways to shape and inform human experience (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989/1991). Particularly against the backdrop of "imperialist White supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 1984), the very visible and intersecting identities of race and gender (and their accompanying oppressions) bring varying material, psychological, and social consequences. Indeed,

looks can be deceiving and categories of "race" (and gender) as traditionally formulated do not always work. It would be misguided and dangerous to believe otherwise. However, it is important to recognize how those in power within the "imperialist White supremacist capitalist patriarchy" context of U.S. society have weaponized physical *difference* – phenotype/racialization, gender, age, sexuality, and class (among other identities) – to create social inequality in the Western hemisphere. As Patricia Hill Collins (1997) wrote:

> It is common location within hierarchical power relations that creates groups, not the results of collective decision making of the individuals within groups. Race, class, social class, ethnicity, age, and sexuality are not descriptive categories of identity applied to individuals. Instead, these elements of social structure emerge as fundamental devices that foster inequality." (p. 376)

As Collins (1997) suggested, power creates and organizes individuals into group. Thus, identity – group nor individual – is not neutral or passive. Rather, identity emerges from and contributes to how individuals and groups experience inequality. WOC share a unique experience due to the social conditions given to them. However, it is also important to remain aware of how power is shaped and reshaped by one's context.

This dissertation focuses on the lived experiences of self-identified WOC. Following the sentiments of Ross, Crenshaw, Collins, and others, I approach and operationalize the term *Women of Color* as one of collective empowerment, solidarity, and, yes, (self-) description. Given the complicated nature of "race" and "gender," I opted

to leave the categories "women" and "of Color" open to self-identification, allowing individuals to self-select into the study. I did not want to leave out individuals who may fit under the umbrella but feel left out for various reasons. For example, some Multiracial or Biracial women with light skin might not feel comfortable identifying as WOC. Or, the term "woman" may often implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) mean cisgender woman in research studies. Thus, I chose to define *Women of Color* as broadly as possible, while also allowing individuals to self-identity and self-select into the study. As I wrote in the call for participants (and returned to several times as discussion emerged around my definition):

> "Women of Color (WOC)" as an inclusive term for individuals (e.g. cisgender women, transgender women, gender nonconforming persons who for professional reasons may find this language most appropriate) who utilize this particular language to self-define and describe their experiences within the professional workplace of academic advising. Specifically, the term "WOC" is one that recognizes women-identified persons of color's individual and shared experiences of oppression at the intersection of race, class, and gender. A few examples of how WOC might identify themselves include Black, Latina, Asian-American, Biracial, Hispanic, Native American, African American, Multi-ethnic, Indigenous, Asian, Arab American, Multi-Racial, Jewish, and so on.

While the definition may appear to be limited in scope, it afforded potential participants the opportunity to self-define using commonly agreed upon categories of race and gender.

Inviting participants to self-define as *Women of Color* empowered participants to define themselves for themselves and (re)claim their experiences. As well, it greatly benefited this study. While the complex commonality of living as a minoritized woman served as my starting point, nuance and diversity emerged as WOC advisors shared stories and facilitated intersectional analysis. As a result, an understanding of what it is like and what it means to be a WOC academic advisor in public higher education institutions emerged.

Professional Academic Advising/ Professional Academic Advisors

Scholars and practitioners alike utilize the term "advising" to discuss how varying groups of advisors (i.e., faculty, counselors, graduate students, peers, administrators, and staff) play a major role in students' holistic development (DeSousa, 2005). However, not all advisors are the same. Though no universal definition for academic advising exists (Aiken-Wisniewski, Johnson, Larson, & Barkemeyer, 2015; Johnson, Larson, & Barkemeyer, 2015), professional academic advisors differ from their faculty (and other institutional) counterparts in that their sole responsibility is to advise students with the primary focus being academic success (Larson et al., 2018). Some scholars place "professional" at the beginning of *academic advising* as a rhetorical gesture to distinguish full-time advising staff from faculty advisors, counselors, and others who contribute to

the advising process in some way, even though advising is not traditionally understood as a profession[5] (Shaffer, Zalewski, & Leveille, 2010; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008).

Recently, Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, and Barkemeyer (2018) used the analytic induction research method – a method of using the words of your participants to construct a description of a phenomenon of interest – to create a definition of academic advising. From their findings, Larson et al. derived that, "Academic advising applies knowledge of the field to empower students and campus and community members to successfully navigate academic interactions related to higher education" (86). While their definition is not conclusive, it captures the spirit of what academic advising is for this study. Following their definition, I also believe that professional academic advising is one of the few liminal fields in higher education institutions that function in-between the worlds of academic affairs and student affairs in order to ensure students' academic success. The individuals who work in advising, professional academic advisors, are most often bachelor's or master's degree-holding professionals whose full-time job

[5] According to Shaffer, Zalewski, and Leveille (2010), leading scholars in the field do not consider academic advising as a profession. Professions, traditionally defined, meet distinct educational, societal, legal criteria. Looking at academic advising from a sociological perspective, the scholars (Shaffer et al., 2010) define *profession* as "a white-collar occupation that confers on workers a relatively high level of prestige and that requires extensive formal education as a condition of entry-level employment" (p. 67). Under this definition, advising fails to be seen as a profession because it lacks specialization, expertise, and prestige. As a young field, advising has few graduate-level programs devoted to its unique knowledge, a required criterion from a sociological perspective (Macionis, 2010). Lack of graduate-level programs contributes to lack of specialization and expertise. Further, a master's degree is still overwhelmingly preferred, while a bachelor's degree is required.

responsibility is to facilitate students' development, integration (retention and persistence), and graduation (Cook, 2009). For this study, I use the labels advisor, academic advisor, professional advisor, and professional academic advisor interchangeably.

Race and Ethnicity

The realities of human life and experience often outpace theory. Socially inscribed categories such as race/ethnicity and gender are broadly understood as "natural" (and, sometimes, fixed) categories that are we are born into. For this reason, the concepts of race and ethnicity, closely related yet distinct terms (Coleman, 2008; Gonzalez-Smith, Swanson, & Tanaka, 2014; Phinney, 1996), are used interchangeably in everyday language. Shaped by larger structural forces, race and ethnicity colors how humans make sense of themselves and/in the world (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). They are tools through which difference and oppression are constructed and perpetuated.

For this study, race refers to the systematic, socially constructed, and determined status of people, based on physical difference for the maintenance of power of the White populations that created it (Haney-Lopez, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994). Ethnicity refers to a perceived group identification and membership based on common language, ancestry, nationality, blood, cultural proximity, pattern of behavior and belief, and religion (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). Smedley and Smedley (2005) contended that physical characteristics are not useful for defining an individual's ethnicity because we cannot equate race with cultural group membership.

Theoretical Framework Overview: Intersectionality

The importance of utilizing a theoretical framework that can simultaneously address difference – across multiple identities, voices, and contexts – and (complex) commonality in WOC advisors' experiences cannot be understated. Thus, intersectionality theoretically grounded this study. As an analytical tool central to WOC feminisms, intersectionality provides scholars the opportunity to acknowledge and address the varying ways in which multiple systems of privilege and oppression interlock to shape and inform the experiences of individuals and groups who have multiple marginalized identities. Contemporary versions of intersectionality have extended analysis (and method) to studying the complexity of all human experience (see, for example, Collins & Bilge, 2016; Davis, 2008; Levine-Rasky, 2011; MacKinnon, 2013).

Using intersectionality as the guiding framework for this study accomplishes several tasks. First, it centers WOC, a historically overlooked and erased group with multiple marginalized intersecting identities (Bowleg, 2012; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Starting from such experiences allows for new knowledge to emerge and old knowledge to be seen anew. Moreover, starting from these perspectives allows for elevating historically overlooked and erased voices and experiences.

Second, intersectionality seeks to address the ways in which power situates and shapes WOC (and their experiences). Replacing either/or logic, an intersectional approach embraces the complex, messy, and complicated nature of WOC advisors as

multidimensional, dynamic characters with varying levels of access to privilege and power (Collins, 2000). As an analytical tool, intersectionality helped me uncover the ways WOC experience differences from and (complex) commonalities with their White, male, and WOC colleagues and students. Intersectionality also provided me the opportunity to see a range of similarities and differences in participants' expressions of agency and resistance and approaches to change-work within the advising space and the institution more broadly.

Finally, using an intersectional approach helps scholars to "socially locate individuals in the context of their 'real lives'" (Berger & Guidroz, 2009, p. 1). It is important that scholars do not lump all WOC together, reducing them to a monolith. While WOC may share experiences at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities (i.e., race and gender) and institutional position (i.e., academic advisor), it is important to recognize that context and experiences (past and current), among other factors, can create contradictory stories that gift the reader a fuller understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Additionally, it is important to recognize that other intersectional identities (e.g., class, disability, etc.) may also impact WOC's experiences. Thus, scholars must remain committed to rigorously seeking to understand WOC's lived experiences as defined by the WOC themselves – including in this study.

For the purposes of this study, I focus specifically on the intersection of race and gender due to the relative silence in advising scholarship about how race and gender impact advisors' workplace experiences. While other intersectional identities (class,

disability, parenthood, educational status, etc.) may be significant in the lives of WOC, they were beyond the scope of this study[6]. Committed to gaining a fuller understanding of WOC's experiences within higher education, specifically academic advising, my use of intersectionality falls under an intra-categorical approach (McCall, 2005).

Leslie McCall (2005) contends that an intra-categorical approach is one that recognizes complexity within groups that have been traditionally overlooked at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. Mainly adopted by Feminists of Color, an intra-categorical approach recognizes the problem with essentializing identity, or categorization, and arguing absolute universal experience. However, intra-categorical analysis finds categorization, or identity, to be a useful tool for exploring diversity in group members' experiences and perceptions. Using such an approach, I simultaneously seek to uncover new understandings of WOC's shared experiences at the intersection of race, gender, and professional identity and seek to explore the differences within the group.

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[6] As Feminist-of-Color scholars have argued, social categories of race, gender, and class have played the most significant role in shaping and ordering Women of Color's experiences (Collins, 2000). This is not to say that other identities do not intersect and impact WOC's lives. As this study (and others) shows, identities such as motherhood, student status (e.g., first-generation, graduate education), professional identity in another field, as well as context (e.g., growing up in all-White communities, parental educational attainment, being from Texas vs. being a Texas transplant) intersect to shape and inform how WOC experience and perceive their realities and how they are experienced and perceived by others. Using intersectionality as a theoretical framework allowed for this nuance across similar racial and gender identities to emerge. However, given the dearth of advising scholarship on WOC advisors' experiences, I chose to contribute to the field by focusing on the WOC's experiences at the intersection race, gender, and institutional position.

Delimitations

This study focused on full-time professional academic advisors at public colleges and universities who self-identify as WOC and have at least one academic year of advising experience in their respective colleges. Other institutional types were excluded due to their specialized focus. Additionally, the majority of other institutional types (e.g., private universities and law school) used faculty advising models. Also, one year of experience was the criteria because I believe that one year allows advisors to learn and become comfortable with/in the culture of their institutions and the expectations of their jobs.

Using purposeful sampling, I focused on WOC academic advisors to center their experiences and elevate their voices. According to Patton (2015), purposeful sampling allows scholars to select participants who fit the objectives of the study as a way to obtain rich information. In studying the lived experiences of WOC advisors, it was important to obtain WOC advisors because they are the experts on their experiences. There was also a deliberate effort not to provide a comparative study between WOC advisors and their White, male, and faculty/administrative counterparts to avoid reinforcing White, male, and faculty/administrative experiences as the norm (Stanley, 2006).

Assumptions

This dissertation study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Participants will be honest in their self-identification as WOC, according to the definition provided for the study.
2. Participants will have at least one year of experience in their position at their respective college or university.
3. Participants will honestly share their experiences.
4. Participants will have a shared understanding of what it means to be and experience advising as "WOC professional academic advisors".

Significance of the Study

Scholars continually identify knowledge gaps about WOC experiences in higher education. WOC scholars (e.g., Turner, González, & Wong, 2011) have pointed out that White academics often subsume WOC experiences under two larger groups: *People of Color* (men) and *women* (White). Henry (2010), West (2011), San Antonio (2015) and others contended that scholarship focusing on WOC in higher education too often paints a monolithic picture of experience, primarily focusing on faculty and administrators. Moreover, several scholars have investigated the well-known idea that predominantly White institutions are "chilly," or hostile environments for all WOC who work, live, and learn on the campus grounds (Luna et al., 2010; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Turner, 2002). Thus, illuminating WOC experiences, particularly WOC advisors, even in small numbers, will add critical voices that have been missing from the research.

The experiences of WOC advisors in higher education are too different from their White, male advisor and faculty/administration counterparts to remain understudied.

Understanding how these women perceive their experiences may reveal a unique understanding of workplace experience not yet discovered and provide tools for institutional stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, staff, and administration) to transform the institution of higher education. WOC can provide critical insight into how they navigate higher education as institutional agents and, potentially, agents of social change in complicated, creative, and transformative ways. Collins (2000) and other WOC scholars have discussed at length how marginalized women use creative measures to challenge oppressive systems and find agency. Scholars of Color have also discussed how the oppressed can also be the oppressor and/or become complicit in systems that work against them and those who look like them (see: Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Mitchell et al., 2010).

Revealing WOC advisors' experiences may benefit three groups. First, the findings of this study can help advising scholars and leaders:

- Improve student and staff recruitment and retention processes, structural hiring, and mentorship programs
- Strengthen professional standards and advising models, with a focus on reframing interpersonal relationships and advising environments; and
- Serve as advocates for social justice and multiculturalism within the field and, more broadly, within U.S. colleges and universities.

Second, the findings of this study could be helpful to other WOC advisors, aspiring or already in the field, to know that they are not alone even when

marginalization and isolation may be their immediate reality. Throughout the study, I found myself curious as well as hopeful of what these stories would reveal as I delved further into the research.

Finally, the findings in this study may positively impact students, particularly marginalized students. As the US and higher education become increasingly diverse (Rouse, 2011), advising scholars and leaders would do well to listen to and learn from WOC advisors' experiences. By valuing WOC advisors' voices and trying to understand their unique needs, pressures, and experiences, advising administrators may learn simultaneously how to support their employees and the increasingly diverse student populations that may share similar needs and experiences.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the dissertation study focused on WOC professional academic advisors by presenting a brief overview of the status of WOC in the field of advising. To date, little is known about WOC professional advisors' experiences and the role intersectionality plays in their workplace experiences. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore and understand how WOC make sense of their unique experiences as professional academic advisors. Focusing on nine self-identified WOC professional academic advisors, this study asks: What are the lived experiences of WOC professional academic advisors? This chapter synthesized the following: 1) problem and purposes statements, 2) the research question that guides this study, 3) a

definition of key terms, 4) an overview of the theoretical framework guiding this study (intersectionality), 5) delimitations and assumptions, 7) and significance of the study.

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework of intersectionality. I also critically analyze existing scholarship relevant to this research study. Due to the lack of research on WOC advisors' experiences, I explore the broad topics of academic advising and WOC experiences in higher education. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and methods used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Using several databases, including Google Scholar, and prominent advising journals such as the NACADA Journal, I found no literature specifically addressing WOC advisors' experiences. One article and one dissertation (Museus & Ravello, 2010; Nadler, 2007) included WOC advisors' voices in their findings, but WOC advisors were not the focus of this literature. The lack of research demonstrates the overwhelming inattention to WOC advisors' realities. Consequently, the literature erroneously advances a monolithic framing of WOC experiences in higher education and perpetuates the idea that advisors' professional identities are not mediated by other identities. One article and one dissertation (Museus & Ravello, 2010; Nadler, 2007) included WOC advisors' voices in their findings, but WOC advisors were not the focus of this literature. The lack of research demonstrates the overwhelming inattention to WOC advisors' realities. Consequently, the literature erroneously advances a monolithic framing of WOC experiences in higher education and perpetuates the idea that advisors' professional identities are not mediated by other identities. At the very least, the gap in knowledge perpetuates and reifies the proper "advising" subject as a middle-classed, White woman working at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities (PWCU). At its worst, however, the gap in scholarship contributes to ongoing erasure, marginalization, and

dismissal of ALANA women and other traditionally oppressed groups in the advising space, a detriment to advisors and students alike.

Considering the unique experiences of WOC both socially and in the advising space, I employed intersectionality as my theoretical framework. For the purposes of this qualitative study, the literature review captured two primary areas: 1) relevant research on WOC in higher education; and 2) relevant research on professional academic advisors in higher education. Due to the lack of critical scholarship on WOC advisors in particular, examining these two more general areas of literature provides a better understanding of relevant research that informs this study.

WOC in Higher Education

Increased attention has been given to the unique histories, experiences, and cultural differences of Black, Asian, Latina, and Native American women in higher education to provide correctives that challenge the monolithic framings that often overlook or undervalue their experiences and contributions. In doing such work, scholars have built upon the Feminist-of-Color tradition of making visible the complex commonalities and distinctions between marginalized women. One significant commonality for WOC in higher education is their experience of challenges and barriers at the intersection of race and gender. Major challenges include underrepresentation and marginalization, tokenism, lack of mentorship, and other forms of bias and discrimination from their colleagues and students on a daily basis (see: Alexander-Lee, 2014; Alfred, 2005; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011; Ka'opua, 2013; Medina & Luna, 2000).

Moreover, the imposition of external and internal norms, ideologies, and values on WOC sitting at the intersection of marginalized identities and personal and professional responsibilities adds unique stress and pressure to their work experiences.

As noted earlier, a search for literature on WOC advisors yielded no results. Thus, I chose to examine the literature on WOC in higher education more broadly. While the body of literature overwhelmingly focuses on WOC faculty and administrators, it is useful for demonstrating how the inherently racist, sexist, and classist structure of higher education affects WOC. In the next section, I discuss WOC positionality in higher education as it relates to intersectionality, briefly describe their difference from MOC and White women, examine intersectionality in higher education as it relates to WOC's experiences, and outline the distinct challenges WOC face in higher education. Brief consideration is also given to scholarship on ALANA women's coping and success strategies. However, a gap in the literature still exists around WOC advisors' experiences in higher education.

WOC, White Women, and Men of Color

Readers may sense that this study enforces a WOC versus White/male binary. However, that is not my motive. WOC share complex commonalities not only with those under the WOC umbrella, but also with those outside of it – including White men. This study seeks to illuminate WOC advisors' experiences, acknowledging that WOC experiences often differ from their male and White counterparts. To this end, the existing literature provides numerous studies revealing how gender and race intersect

simultaneously to impact WOC experiences in ways uniquely different from their male and White counterparts (ASHE Higher Education Report 2009; Cole, 2009; Monzo & SooHoo, 2014). Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, and White (2014) found that WOC received less support, leadership opportunities, and resources and faced more criticism and barriers than their counterparts in leadership roles within higher education.

Regarding career, economic, and social advancement, scholars (e.g., Wing, 2003; Kellerman, 2003) contended that WOC remain disadvantaged in the US and in the workplace. Sanchez-Hucles & Davis (2010) confirmed these findings, noting that WOC are often criticized and stereotyped based on their (visible) identity, while White women are judged on their ability to perform. Additionally, Kellerman (2003) noted that often workplace rules and policies "which hold for White women does not [always] necessarily hold for women of other racial and ethnic groups" (p. 58). This viewpoint is consistent with feminists of color who contend that the meeting of non-Whiteness and womanhood as represented and understood within society creates a unique system of oppression that places WOC in precarious positions and makes them vulnerable to violence and discrimination in ways that White women and MOC are not (Collins, 2000; Sue, 2010). As these scholars suggest, racist and sexist ideologies permeating major institutions like U.S. higher education put WOC in a difficult situation. Put differently, WOC within higher education—as in other industries—rarely experience the same privileges (i.e., White privilege for White women and male privilege for MOC) that can sometimes alleviate the sting of oppression.

Prior research also suggests that White women and MOC are, at times, complicit in systems of oppression and unintentionally negatively influence WOC workplace experiences (Kellerman, 2003; Wing, 2003). WOC scholars such as Crenshaw (1989) have discussed at length the ways in which White women and MOC engage in attitudes and practices (racism, sexism, and misogyny/misogynoir) that perpetuate dominant, oppressive systems committed to exploiting, devaluing, and erasing WOC. The exclusionary, discriminatory attitudes and practices of White men (race and gender), White women (race), and MOC (gender) remains an important topic, well-documented in scholarship that often focuses on WOC faculty and WOC leaders in the fields of education and business (Pittman, 2010).

Intersectionality and/in Higher Education

In U.S. higher education systems, bodies, cultures, values, and ideologies that fall outside of normalized White heteronormativity, or the mythical norm (Lorde, 1984), are distanced from power through institutional and interpersonal attitudes and practices that reify White men as the center and perpetuate marginalization and silencing of all those deemed Other (Collins, 2000). Such a distancing process occurs more acutely and, perhaps, more often as more layers of marginalized identities intersect. For WOC, the intersection of their very visible and very salient marginalized identities—race and gender—shape their experience in the world and U.S. higher education (Crenshaw, 1991; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Turner et al., 2011). This distance, based on WOC "outsider-ness," often leads to:

> being more visible and on display; feeling more pressure to conform, to make fewer mistakes; becoming socially invisible, not to stand out; finding it harder to gain credibility; being more isolated and peripheral; being more likely to be excluded from informal peer networks, having limited sources of power through alliances; having fewer opportunities to be sponsored; facing misperceptions of their identity and role in the organization; being stereotyped; facing more personal stress. (Turner, 2002, p. 76)

ALANA women's social location places them far away from power, privilege, and resources and increases stress and pressures.

Positioned so far from Whiteness and maleness[7], among other dominant statuses, WOC encounter additional challenges and barriers in the workplace (Turner, 2002; Turner, González, & Wong, 2011). These challenges include disrespect, invisibility, lack of access to formal and informal networks, lack of hiring and career advancement, a lack of support and resources, and stereotyping due to their perceived "otherness" (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Ford, 2011; Hall, Everett, & Hamilton-Mason, 2012; Harris, Wright & Msengi, 2011; Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Maramba & Museus, 2011; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Ponjuan, Conley, & Trower, 2011;

[7] Like Women of Color identities, Whiteness and maleness are not monolithic identities. However, as previous scholarship and the current structure of higher education suggests, Whiteness and maleness are still the markers by which WOC advisors (and other marginalized groups) are measured. Future research may consider the ways in which White men, White women, and Men of Color (among other groups) experience and are impacted by intersectionality and interlocking oppressions

Sulé, 2009, 2011; Turner et al., 2008; Turner et al, 2011; Zambrana et al., 2015). For instance, Turner et al. (2011) found that WOC faculty were aware of and frustrated by continuously perpetuated myths of White (male) superiority that framed non-White faculty, specifically WOC faculty, as incompetent and inferior. Moreover, as "outsiders within" (Collins, 2000), WOC experience varying and often conflicting roles and receive conflicting messages while navigating institutions of higher education. Attempts to juggle clashing cultures, traditional values, and professional and institutional demands that require various degrees of conformity often leads to increased psychological stress, bicultural stress, and work-related stress (Clayton, 2009; De los Santos, 2008). WOC also encounter concrete ceilings (Ogilvie & Jones, 1996), or impenetrable barriers that are impossible to break through as it relates to career advancement and leadership opportunities (Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

Common Challenges and Barriers

Due to the ways in which race and gender have been operationalized in U.S. society and, by extension, in U.S. institutions of higher education, WOC share common experiences of discrimination and oppression at institutional and interpersonal levels. Vakalahi and Starks (2011) linked discrimination and oppression to WOC's high levels of stress. Despite researchers' over-emphasis on WOC in more privileged institutional positions (i.e., faculty and administration), the literature provides an understanding of issues that WOC professional advisors may encounter in their work. The most commonly referred to themes of discrimination and oppression that influence WOC experiences

include underrepresentation, marginalization, tokenization, stereotyping, isolation, and lack of mentorship. The next section provides a brief overview of these themes to paint a picture of WOC experiences according to current scholarship and to show the gap in knowledge about the unique experiences of WOC professional advisors.

Underrepresentation. WOC are underrepresented in most positions on college and university campuses (Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011; San Antonio, 2015; West, 2011; Zeligman et al., 2015). There are several reasons for their underrepresentation, including that WOC are often deemed less qualified for positions and less knowledgeable than their White, male counterparts (Yoshinaga-Itano, 2006). As a result, WOC – particularly at PWCU's – are not received-well on their campus (i.e., "chilly" campus climates).

Scholars such as Mays (2013) and Patit and Tack (1998) also found that WOC are often given jobs and wages lower than those given their White and male counterparts, even when they have more impressive credentials. Additionally, scholars have discovered that the type of jobs given to WOC tend to focus on diversity, equal opportunity, student support services (e.g., advising, admissions, multicultural center), or other positions that do not allow for advancement or full engagement within the university structure (Crawford & Smith, 2005). As well, scholars like Yoshinaga-Itano (2006) have linked WOC marginalization to high turnover rates. LeGrande (2016) found that while WOC mid-level student affairs administrators in the Texas Gulf Coast region loved their work, factors like organizational norms, culture, and a climate in higher education that

facilitated bias and discrimination; lack of access to mentoring; and unclear paths to career advancement negatively impacted their job satisfaction.

Marginalization. In the hostile, "chilly" environment of higher education, marginalization is a daily experience for WOC in higher education. Marginalization can be defined as relegating individuals to lower statuses or standing and moving them away from the center of power, activity, and decision-making within the private and public sphere (Collins, 2000; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). WOC's statuses of "peculiar marginality" (Collins, 2000, p. 11) as subjects at the intersections of racial and sexual oppression places them physically, psychically, and intellectually outside the often-recognized "legitimate" (Perry, Moore, Edwards, Acosta, & Frey, 2009) professoriate space where Whiteness and maleness, especially where they intersect, are believed to be normal and superior (Perry et al., 2009). As a result, WOC are vulnerable to disparate hiring practices, stereotyping, tokenism and isolation, devaluation of experience and knowledge, and lack of mentorship (García, 2005; Mays, 2013; Molina, 2008; Turner et al., 2008).

This is not unique, however, to majority-serving institutions. Although the bulk of research focuses on the experiences of WOC at PWCUs, a small number of scholars have presented similar findings on WOC gendered experiences at Minority-Serving Institutions (MSI) (Bonner, 2001; Gasman, 2007; Harper et al., 2004; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Gasman (2007) historiography of gender at HBCU's showed how Black male-dominated HBCU administration has marginalized and excluded Black women from HBCU leadership and histories. Similarly, Bonner (2001) discovered similar issues of

marginalization and exclusion for Black Women at HBCU's because of their gender. Additionally, she found that Black women were reluctant to discuss issues relating to mentoring and gender bias for fear of backlash.

Isolation and loneliness. Due to underrepresentation and marginalization, WOC are often overworked, alienated, and presumed incompetent (Griffin, Bennett, & Harris, 2013; Shillingford, Trice-Black, & Butler, 2013; Turner, 2002). Frequently the "only one" in their departments, WOC have to make concerted efforts to find community and mentors to cope with isolation and loneliness (Gonzalez, 2007; Hall et al., 2012). Gonzalez (2007) found that Latina faculty members often felt isolated and had to actively look for peers, colleagues, and mentors, because they were too often the only one in their departments. Interestingly, in an early study of Black women administrators' experiences, Myrtis Hall Mosley (1980) found that Black women administrators not only experienced isolation and a lack of support from their White colleagues but also felt deserted and unsupported by Black male counterparts.

Tokenism. WOC are often numerical tokens who symbolize diversity but are not valued for their perspectives or knowledge furthers personal marginalization. Sometimes, if an institution is lucky, WOC fulfill hiring quotas as a "twofer", or someone who fits one or more diversity requirements (Allen, 1995). As the only one (or, one of few) in their departments or offices, WOC operate under heightened surveillance and scrutiny and the pressure to perform all while being socially alienated and isolated (Kanter, 2008; Turner et al., 2008). Additionally, institutions see WOC as women's or People of Color's

lone representative and are made to speak on behalf of the entire group because of their race and gender. Further, WOC may also experience bias from Men of Color and White Women, two groups who still benefit from relative privilege due to their gender and race (Combs, 2003).Consequently, the pressure of being the only one can lead to increased and chronic stress, depression, anxiety, and other maladies.

Kanter (2008) recognized that tokenized groups felt the need to work harder, or prove themselves, as one response to the pressures that result from tokenism. Hall, Everett, and Hamilton-Mason (2012) found that Black women face increased pressure to prove their "worth" as tokens at PWCUs. Proving their worth often means not only working harder but going beyond their required work responsibilities by sitting on committees and formally and informally assisting Students of Color. However, as Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson (2018) explained, though working harder brought material success, it did not change the exclusion, lack of belonging, and stress that came with being the only POC or women in the office.

Stereotypes. Another way that marginalization functions is through stereotypes. Stereotypes are used to dictate and define how WOC should act and speak in the workplace (Griffin et al., 2013; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Individuals may use stereotypes to challenge WOC's authority, a reminder to "stay in one's place" (Navarro et al., 2013; Turner, 2002; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2006). For example, Asian women may be stereotyped as docile and submissive and students may think to challenge her authority or

act out in the classroom or advising space. This is one way that WOC are placed into "crooked rooms" (Harris-Perry, 2011).

Much like crooked rooms at any funhouse, Harris-Perry's (2011) crooked room represents distortion, optical illusion, and unbalance…minus the fun. As Harris-Perry (2011) theorized, crooked rooms are dominant narratives of exclusion that thrive through (mis)representing, or warping, Black women's (and other WOC) humanity. Cultural (mis)representations occur through the creation and prolonged use of negative controlling images that permeate every institution, such as higher education advising spaces. Along with "Angry Black Woman", also known as the "Black Bitch", popular stereotypes including Jezebel, Sapphire, and Mammy (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011) are forced upon Black women. For other WOC, stereotypes may include hypersexuality, romanticized savage (Native women), submissiveness (Asian women), and "spiciness" (Latina women).

When confronted with these crooked rooms, WOC are made to "figure out which way is up" (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 29). Some tilt and bend to fit into the confines of the rooms (or stereotypes), while others find ways to get upright (strategically use or resist). However, as Harris-Perry (2011) explains, getting upright in a crooked room is challenging. One primary crooked room that Black women in higher education are forced into is the role of *Mammy*. Howard-Baptiste (2014) noted, focusing on Black women faculty, that many must endure "mammy moments" – moments of interactions with students and colleagues where overt and covert behavior and language "communicate

disrespect and distrust of Black women's worth and abilities" (p. 765). Marbley et al. (2011) shared similar findings as illustrated in a story told by Dr. Pratt. Dr. Pratt was a Black woman faculty member who found her identity reduced from highly-educated faculty member and foreign language expert to "[o]nly a Black woman" (168) by an angry White male colleague when she made decisions about a one of her own programs.

Likewise, Turner et al. (2011) demonstrated a moment when a White male colleague invoke a stereotype about marginalized identity and affirmative action to discredit the competency and qualification of a WOC faculty member who received an administrative position that they both desired. In this example, as in others, White colleagues armed with "just enough knowledge" can avoid engaging in overtly racist dialogue. Instead, he opted subtly to perpetuate White supremacist ideas about WOC's presumed lack of qualification, experience, and competency through the vehicle of affirmative action arguments. These examples demonstrate how hegemonic ideals, or overarching and dominant societal beliefs that stereotype WOC as inferior and incompetent, continually permeate the institution of higher education, leaving WOC in a constant fight to prove themselves. Over time, continued stereotyping can lead to imposter syndrome, or questioning one's own qualifications. Frequent experiences of being stereotyped can all lead to decreased self-efficacy, strained professional relationships, and attrition (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Mentoring. The absence of mentorship can have detrimental effects for WOC. Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) found that mentorship played a critical role in WOC

faculty's success and persistence, while a lack of mentorship often led to unsuccessful tenure processes for WOC faculty. Looking more broadly at faculty of color, Stanley (2006) noted that, "outsider[s] in academia usually receives little or no mentoring, inside information, or introductions to valuable connections and networks" (p. 14). Little knowledge about and access to professional opportunities and resources, which can be often gained through mentorships, can lead to high levels of attrition, limited sense of "fit" or belonging, and low job satisfaction for WOC in higher education (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Trower & Bleak, 2004).

Numerous studies have also shown the positive impact that mentorship and networking (both formal and informal) provide for WOC (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Gregory, 2001; Zambrana, Ray, Espino, Castro, Cohen, & Eliason, 2015). Various benefits of mentorship include career advancement, greater retention rates, reduced isolation, greater role management, socialization into the academy, finding and establishing one's voice, and learning to navigate academia's spoken and unspoken rules, among other things (Chang, Longman & Franco, 2014; Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010; Stanley, 2006). Mentorship also increases WOC social capital (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Looking at the experiences of Black women faculty members, Gregory (2001) asserted that these support systems are vital because they provide "guidance, strength, and encouragement to help [Black women faculty members] negotiate academic settings that are often unfriendly and isolating" (p. 131). Patton and Harper (2003) echoed this sentiment by suggesting that mentorship relationships

provided Black women with "nurturing, mothering, and culturally-relevant counsel" (p. 72). Though the literature largely focuses on Black women's experiences, scholars have found similar themes for other WOC. Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) argued that academic departments, higher education institutions, and national organizations would do well to offer WOC faculty opportunities for mentorship, given the benefits mentoring provide to both WOC and their institutions. However, opportunities for mentorship and networking are often limited within these structures (Patton, 2009).

Stress and/in Higher Education

The hostilities, stereotyping, and other forms of discrimination encountered by WOC compounds their work stress and their levels of stress and distress more generally (Turner, 2002). Although no universal definition for stress exists, stress can be characterized by four underlying attributes: 1) stress is dynamic and consistent; 2) stress can be experienced as perceived (psychological) or real (physical); 3) stress can be set off by internal and/or external events; and 4) stress most often negatively impacts the body, mind, and soul. These characteristics capture a basic understanding of stress that affects WOC, caused by their experiences in the workplace. Thus, for the purposes of this study, I defined *stress* as a common occurrence in which experiences, demands, and/or environments – often-negative – tax or exceed an organism's capacity to cope, resulting in dis-ease (Cohen, Kessler, & Gordon, 1995).

Work-Related Stress

As with anything else, too much stress (chronic stress) can negatively influence an individual's health and well-being and can lead, ultimately, to burnout (Kokkinos, 2007). In the workplace, two common chronic stressors are job demands and individual, identity-based differences (Carr, Kelley, Keaton, & Albrecht 2011). Work-related stress is the product of large workloads, long or irregular work hours, too much work/not enough time, role conflict, workplace incivility, lack of support from colleagues and supervisors; lack of resources, and/or low wages (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Scholars have linked work-related stress to poor job performance and satisfaction, negative physical and mental wellbeing, depression, and issues in personal and professional relationships (Barsky, Thoresen, Warren, & Kaplan, 2004; Kleiner & Pavalko, 2010). Walsh and Walsh (2001) also found a link between high-levels of work stress and increases in attrition and absenteeism. Moreover, as it relates to individuals in helping fields like education and counseling, work-related stress is linked to higher risks of burnout, compassion fatigue, and increased risks to both physiological and psychological health (Gellis & Kim, 2004; Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002; Thorn, 2011).

Identity-Related Stress

While work is stressful for all professionals, daily exposure to racism and sexism multiplies the stress experienced by professionals from marginalized groups (Hall et al., 2012; Sue, 2010; Turner, 2002). Often, marginalized persons experience greater stress and increased vulnerability to discrimination than individuals who fit into majority

groups such as male, White, and straight (Turner & Lloyd, 2004). As Bryant-Davis (2007) suggests, negative psychological and physiological consequences develop for those who, on individual and systemic levels, are the targets of frequent discrimination and harassment. Research confirms these findings, revealing the negative effects of stress on marginalized persons whose identities often become salient, relevant, and/or contested in the workplace and in society at large (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Settles, 2004).

At the intersections of race, gender, and work, WOC are particularly vulnerable. As a result, WOC are at increased risk of experiencing trauma in both individual and institutional attitudes and practices due to the double whammy of race- and gender-related stress (Beale, 1970; Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; King, 1988; Woo, 2000).

Stress and WOC in Higher Education

The unique social, historical, political, and cultural location of WOC provides context for their distinct experiences with stress (Allen et al., 2002). Within the workplace, much like within society, WOC experience multiple sources of oppression due to their race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, age, motherhood, and/or disabilities (APA, 2007; Woo, 2000). For instance, Bowleg, Brooks, and Ritz (2008) found that Black lesbians faced discrimination based on their race, gender, and sexual orientation. Scholars have found that WOC are paid less than their peers, must learn to control their emotions and expressions when encountering microaggressions and macroaggressions,

and face barriers to career advancement, while experiencing the compounding effects of racism and sexism (Browne & Askew, 2006; Hune, 2006; Leung & Gupta, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Steele, 2016).

Research reveals that issues such as bicultural stress, code-switching, lack of mentoring, micro-aggressions, and familial obligations increase stress for WOC in the workplace (O'Brien, Franco, & Dunn, 2014). WOC professionals must learn to navigate often-competing cultures, their own and the culture of higher education, which is symptomatic of biculturalism. As Giroux, in Darder (1995), contended:

> Biculturalism involves the ongoing process of identity definition, construction, and reconstruction, driven by the collective efforts of subordinate cultural groups to build community solidarity, renegotiate the boundaries of subordinate cultures, and redefine the meaning of cultural identity within the forces of oppression and majority power and domination. (p. x)

Biculturalism, or navigating between two cultures, can increase one's ability to survive in two (or more) worlds (see: Collins' *outsider-within*, King's *multiple consciousness*, Anzaldúa's *mestiza consciousness*, and DuBois' *double consciousness*[8]).

[8] W.E.B. Du Bois (1989) argued that African Americans develop and internalize a *double consciousness* – two warring ways of knowing and seeing one's self and the world (White and Black). Similarly, Gloria Anzaldua (1987) offered theorization around *mestiza consciousness* that considers the multiple ways of knowing that Chicana women develop to navigate the world. Deborah King (1988) provided *multiple jeopardy* and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) offered the concept of *outsider-within* to name and analyze the ways Black women develop consciousness across racial, gender, and class oppressions. According to these Scholars of Color, disenfranchised group have identities (and communities) that are both at odds with one another, causing bicultural stress, and

As Alfred (2001) found, biculturalism allowed WOC faculty to find academic success while affirming and defining themselves for themselves. However, biculturalism may also increase ALANA women's vulnerability to stress. Within higher education and business contexts, WOC professionals must perform in accordance with White male-dominant culture to secure their professional success while living in accordance with their communities (Bell & Nkomo, 2003). The clashing demands of two (or more) cultures create a form of chronic stress, otherwise known as bicultural stress (Romero, Martinez, & Carvajal, 2007).

One way that WOC may learn to cope with bicultural stress is by code-switching, or alternating between native and dominant languages and value systems depending on one's context (Sadao, 2003). For instance, constant demands to suppress a part of one's identity (e.g., race) to be "professional", as defined based on White male experiences, require WOC professionals to juggle multiple and (often) conflicting identity expressions and responsibilities. For some, "being professional" means softening one's voice or speaking only in Standard American English when engaging with White coworkers and students. Though code-switching can be a beneficial tool for knowing how to be in multiple cultures (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002), constant demands to perform Whiteness for White colleagues may cause WOC to feel out of place, torn

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that create unique social locations. Such unique standpoints provide unique ways of knowing and problem-solving that minoritized groups have strategically used to survive a what bell hooks (2004) calls an "imperialist White supremacist capitalist patriarch[al]" (p. 17) world.

between communities, and simply exhausted. As Stanley (2006) suggested, "Living in two worlds and the energy expended in code switching can take its toll on any individual's psyche. In many instances, it leads to occupational stress" (p. 7).

Hall, Everett, and Hamilton-Mason (2012) confirmed these findings, revealing that WOC stressors include experiences of professional, institutional, and interpersonal discrimination such as being overworked, ignored, isolated and alienated, assumed incompetent, and stereotyped. These structural and interpersonal constraints and stressors come as a result of simultaneous racial and sexual bias (and, at times, gendered racism), which negatively affects WOC wellbeing and their ability to perform and "fit" in the workplace (Dace, 2012; DeBlaere & Moradi, 2008; Sue, 2010; Turner, 2002, 2007; Turner & Quaye, 2010; Turner et al., 2008).

Scholars have long studied the results of micro- and macro-aggressions and discrimination. One result is racial battle fatigue. Smith (2004) noted that "[u]nlike typical occupational stress, racial battle fatigue [RBF] is a response to the distressing mental/emotional conditions that result from facing racism daily" (p. 180). In other words, the physiological and psychological responses to instances of racism mirror "combat fatigue in military personnel" (Smith, 2004, p. 180), where the body braces itself for physical attack. RBF can lead to chronic stress that has long-term consequences on the body and mind (Clark et al., 1999; Mays, Cochran, & Barnes, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006). Such consequences of chronic racism include physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, elevated blood press, and chronic pain) as well as PTSD and depression

(Clark et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2006). Further, RBF can negatively impact relationships with White colleagues, increase feelings of alienation and isolation, and fear of job insecurity (Fields, 2007).

Challenging the tendency to approach identities as discrete, other scholars have utilized intersectionality to examine the detrimental impact of racism and sexism for WOC (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010; Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008). The costs for WOC within higher education often include the deterioration of their physical and psychological wellbeing (Perry, Harp, & Oser, 2013; Vakalahi & Starks, 2011; Woods-Giscombé & Lobel, 2008). Dangers to health often include "debilitating strokes, heart attacks, miscarriages, cancer, and psychological breakdowns triggered, at least in part, by workplace abuse...consistent with the voluminous literature on the ways in which exposure to racism increases the risks of mental and physical ailments such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, heart disease, and depression" (Gonzalez & Harris, 2014, p. 185). Other scholars confirm these findings and note that individuals who experience chronic identity-related stress also experience overall poor quality of life (Baker, Buchanan, & Spencer, 2010; Noh & Kaspar, 2003; Utsey & Payne, 2000). Research has also linked racial and gender discrimination to PTSD, burnout, impaired personal and professional relationships, and other emotional, cognitive and behavioral symptoms (Carter, Forsyth, Mazzula, & Williams, 2005; Greer, Laseter, & Asiamah, 2009; Steven-Watkins, Perry, Pullen, Jewell, & Oser, 2014; Walsemann, Gee, & Geronimus, 2009;Wolfgang, West-Olatunji, Overton, Shah, & Coral, 2015). Scholars

have also found that race-based and gender-based discrimination compounds work stress, and that work stress has a "spillover" effect that negatively influences the individual's personal lives (Inzlicht & Kang, 2010; McKay, Arnold, Fratzl, & Thomas, 2008). McKay et al. found that the targets of workplace discrimination or bullying in one aspect of the workplace environment experience stress, frustration, a sense of powerlessness, and other negative affective emotions spillover into all other aspects of their work environment. Inzlicht and Kang (2010) found that continued exposure to stereotype threat contributed to decreased work performance as well as increased anger, stress, and food intake.

Survival, Coping, and Success for WOC in Higher Education

Themes of coping and resistance are prevalent in the research on WOC in higher education (San Antonio, 2015). WOC coping and resistance strategies and practices are developed and used to overcome the barriers that often emerge from their experiences of multiple marginality (Turner, 2002). Coping and resistance strategies and practices can be understood as capital – "navigational capital" (Yosso, 2005) – that helps WOC survive and thrive in institutions like higher education that were not created with them in mind. Two strategies employed by WOC are *masking* and *shifting* (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Masking refers to hiding certain aspects of the self from the gaze of others, while shifting refers to the capacity to ignore or skillfully address disrespectful comments. Other useful tools include (but are not limited to): mentorship, formal and informal networking, spirituality/religion and prayer, storytelling, the use of humor, self-care practices (e.g., exercise, travel, massages, rest, going out, nutritious diet), and family and

friendships as support systems (Cooper, 2006; Gregory, 2001; Henry, 2010; Henry & Glenn, 2009; Sulé, 2009; Vakalahi & Starks, 2011).

Armed with a "specialized knowledge," or knowledge that comes from their experiences as outsiders-within the academy, WOC practice resistance in their teaching, research, and service to transform knowledge and power within higher education spaces (Collins, 2000; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011). Scholars such as Sulé (2009) and Cerecer, Ek, Alanis, & Murakami-Ramalho (2011) found that Black and Brown women use their service and research as tools of resistance and tools to achieve success. Participants in both studies used research and service to challenge the structures in which they work by opting for collaboration over competition on research projects, creating WOC-centered spaces to create community and support, publish research on understudied marginalized groups. Similarly, Latina women scholars have utilized LaCrit, testimonios, and autohistorias[9] to conduct research and challenge White Supremacy and colonial settler logic (see: Burciaga & Navarro, 2015; Huber, 2009; Prieto & Villenas, 2012). As a result, WOC's unique knowledge(s) and resistance

[9] LaCrit departs from Critical Race Theory (CRT) by focusing on the unique experiences of Latino/a/x individuals around issues of race and racism (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Within this vein, LaCrit scholars have used methods of autohistorias, originally developed by Gloria Anzaldúa, and testimonios. Anzaldúa (2002) defined autohistorias as "one's personal and collective history using fictive elements, a sort of fictionalized autobiography or memoir" (p. 578). Testimonios are counter-narratives based on Latino/a/x individuals' unheard and under-told truths and experiential knowledge (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

practices not only create change on their respective college campuses, but also contribute to visions of liberation within society.

A number of studies focus on WOC's use of spirituality as a coping mechanism. Henry and Glenn (2009) asserted that spirituality was an often-used coping mechanism or "a connective strategy to assist Black women in overcoming the issues of isolation and marginalization they experience in higher education" (p. 10). Hall et al. (2012) confirmed these findings and suggested that Black women may use emotion and problem-based coping strategies to deal with workplace adversity and stress.

WOC also credit their unique positions and knowledge(s) as strengths that enriched their work in their institutions, in their departments, and with their students. WOC use their double and multiple consciousness to navigate and bounce back from challenging encounters in the workplace. Additionally, they use their strengths to serve as academic bridges between institution and students and as cultural bridges for students and colleagues (Gooden, 2005; Sulé, 2009). WOC cultural worldviews celebrate giving back, engaging in dialoguing and wisdom sharing, and valuing education. Such worldviews, and their accompanying actions, are useful for social change and liberation (Collins, 2000). Professional standards of academic advising require advisors to embrace a positionality dedicated to social justice in their work to help students achieve success (Towle, 2016).

Summary

In the section above, I explored the current state of WOC experiences in higher education, including the challenges and barriers they face – particularly at the intersection of race and gender. The ever-increasing (though gradually) research on WOC provides greater understanding of WOC experiences, identities, and perspectives. As well, the increase in scholarship on WOC in higher education demonstrates continued commitment to provide correctives to prior research and to transform higher education research, policy, and practice.

Professional Academic Advising in Higher Education

Academic advising in the U.S. was established in the 17th century when higher education systems operated *en loco parentis*, or as a stand-in for parents (Thelin, 2011). However, as the nation grew and higher education evolved, so did academic advising. Cook (2009) notes that major changes between the 17th and early 21st centuries brought increased attention to holistic student development and support and the need for academic advising as a specialized field. Several major shifts in the organizational structure of advising have occurred. First, a formal advising structure has shifted the majority of advising responsibilities from faculty to professional staff (Bruce, 2008; Frost, 1991; Harrison, 2009; Tuttle, 2000). Between the 1930s and 1950s, institutions established advising as a formal professionalized entity operating under student affairs (Frost, 2000; Gordon, 2004; Tuttle, 2000; Thelin, 2011; Hagen & Jordan, 2008; Kuhn, 2008). Since then, institutions have separated career counseling, academic advising, and

(psychological) counseling services and defined each as its own specialized field (Kuhn, 2008; Cook, 2009; Shaffer et al., 2010). These events, especially the last, ensured that institutions positioned professional advisors as the authority on students' personal and academic affairs and spurred the development of the first academic advising centers during the 1950s.

Expanded access to students with more varied needs – and the introduction of theories that help us understand those needs better – helped further solidify the field as a one-stop resource for student success and development. Due to these changes, higher education institutions began quickly to understand the newly specialized position of *academic advisor* as one where devoted professionals occupied multiple roles ranging from campus resource person, to student advocate, to cheerleader and friend, in a burgeoning commitment to student success (Petress, 1996).

Today, scholars and administrators praise academic advising as a vital component of student development, retention, and success (Gordon, Habley & Grites, 2008; Habley, 2004; Kuh, 2008). Scholars continue to clarify the role of advising and to define it as a profession (Himes & Schulenberg, 2016). In addition, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) shows its continued commitment to student success and to clarifying the field's role with the introduction of a new core competencies model design to enhance good advising. This model presents three foundational elements for advisors to understand and master: 1) theories and approaches that drive advising, 2) the knowledge needed to facilitate student development at their institutions (i.e., the needs of

institutions and students), and 3) the ability to relate with students for the purposes of sharing concepts and information from the two prior categories (NACADA, 2017). However, while we now know more about academic advising, a number of issues from advising's early days still haunt the field. Several longstanding issues include faculty members' primary allegiance to their home disciplines and research (sometimes, even over their institutions); views that students seeking advising or help are "weak"; the view of advising as clerical (Himes & Schulenberg, 2016); and professional advisors lack of engagement in and contribution to advising scholarship (Aiken-Wisniewski, Smith, & Troxel, 2010; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010). Important to this study is the absence of advisor of color voices—particularly, WOC advisors – in this conversation.

Topics in Academic Advising

Much like the field of academic advising itself, research on academic advising is still developing (Gordon et al., 2008). One common topic in the body of literature focuses on the evolution of professional advising as a profession and field of inquiry and the advisor's role in it. Within this work, scholars discuss academic advising's scholarly and professional status (Cook, 2009; Habley, 2009; Hughey & Hughey, 2009; Kuhn & Padak, 2008; Shaffer et al., 2010). Research also focuses on differentiating between academic advising organizational structures, or the structure through which advising is delivered to students (Habley, 2004; Pardee, 2000, 2004). Institutions generally operate under one of

the following advising organizational structures: shared, decentralized, or centralized (Pardee, 2004)[10].

Additionally, scholars continually consider how to improve the field (Freeman, 2008; Johnson & Morgan, 2005; Sullivan-Vance, 2008) and help new advisors grow in their practice (Gordon et al., 2008). Regarding improving the field, for instance, scholars have increasingly focused on the potential benefits and problems of utilizing social media as a technological tool to increase student participation and attention for retention purposes (Amador & Amador, 2014; Carter, 2007; Junco, 2010; NACADA, 2011; Pasquini & Steele, 2016). Further, researchers work tirelessly to define and describe educational and professional differences between advisors, organizational reporting structures, and institutional placement (Chabinak, 2010; Lynch & Stucky, 2000; Lynch, 2002).

Another common topic is the link between student retention/satisfaction, the advisor, and advising models/practices. Several scholars address advising delivery systems and models (Campbell & Nutt, 2008; Freeman, 2008; Hale, Graham, & Johnson, 2009; Hollis, 2009; Metzner, 1989; Pryjmachuk, Easton, & Littleword, 2008; Sabin,

[10] According to Pardee (2004), centralized models allow faculty and professional advisors to work in the same space, while decentralized models allow faculty and professional advisors to work from their home department or office. Shared organizational structures are hybrids of centralized and decentralized models that allow some advisors to work from an academic department while others work from an advising center or academic support center. In a shared model, students may transition from a general professional advisor to a faculty advisor once they begin taking their major classes during their junior year.

2012; Smith & Allen, 2006; Tuttle, 2000). Numerous studies focus on students' experiences with advising from students' perspectives. Studies have explored students' needs and expectations (Borgard, 1981; Hughey, 2011; Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013); student-advisor relationships (Barbuto Jr. Story, Fritz, & Schinstock, 2011; Bitz, 2010; McClellan, 2014; Pizzolato, 2008; Schlosser, Lyons, Talleyrand, Kim, & Johnson, 2011; Kosta-Mikel, 2012); student satisfaction with advising (Allen & Smith, 2008; Braun, & Zolfagharian, 2016; Coll & Zalaquett, 2007; Coll, 2008; Guillén, 2010; Hale et al., 2009; Smith & Allen, 2006; Sutton & Sankar, 2011; Whitmore, 2016; Woolston, 2002); and student retention and success (Anderson, Motto, & Bourdeaux, 2014; Baldridge, Kemere, & Green, 1982; Crockett, 1985; Drake, 2011; Kuh, 2008; Lowe & Toney, 2000; NACADA, 2004; Tinto, 2006; Young-Jones et al., 2013). Other studies explore advisors' impact on student retention and success (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Noel-Levitz, 2009). For instance, Zhao, Golde, and McCormick (2007) found that advisor choice and advisor behavior could influence student satisfaction.

A third commonly explored topic is faculty and athletic advisors' impact on student success. Scholars debate the role and expertise (or lack thereof) of faculty advisors, discussing the challenges that untrained full-time faculty serving as academic advisors pose for student success (Allen & Smith, 2008; Mooring, 2016). As well, a number of studies have explored the world of athletic academic advising. One prominent area of focus in this is retention and success for students-athletes who are often racially,

ethnically, and/or economically disadvantaged and academically underprepared but athletically advantaged (Castle, Ammon, Myers, 2014; Gaston-Gayles, 2003; Huml, Hancock, & Bergman, 2014; Schneider, Ross, & Fisher, 2010; Thompson, 2011; Thompson, Petronio, & Braithwaite, 2012; Thompson & Gilchrist, 2011; Tublitz, 2007). Huml, Hancock, and Bergman (2014) note that, according to statistics from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (2014), the number of full-time advisors has increased about 200% in the past 20 years.

A fourth, increasingly important topic in the field is that of advisors' experiences. Issues most recently explored include job satisfaction (Murrell, 2005; Donnelly, 2006; Alleyne, 2013); advisor work-life experience (Epps, 2002; Klusmeier, 2017); advisors "doing" advising (Nadler, 2007); advisor perceptions of heavily involved parents (Parrott, 2010); and advisors' experiences of workplace learning (Tokarczyk, 2012). The majority of these issues have been explored as dissertation topics. Thus, while we know much about advising, we know less about the professional academic advisors who do such vital work across U.S. higher education systems. The following section offers a brief overview of professional academic advising to provide context for this study.

The Professional Academic Advisor

Part of identifying who advisors are and what advisors do includes addressing advisors' training (i.e., professionalization) and exploring their roles and expectations. I have addressed challenges encountered by advisors and briefly discussed advisor roles and expectations in earlier sections of this chapter. In this section, I focus on the advisors'

professional identities and delve deeper into the roles and expectations of advisors to identify their function within the higher education setting.

Professionalization and Professional Identity

Defining and discussing professional identity is important to the field of advising, though the relatively young field remains at a distance from the distinguished title of "profession" as it has been defined historically and sociologically (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Kuhn & Padak, 2008; Habley, 2009; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008; Shaffer et al., 2010). Sociological literature defines a profession based on four characteristics: education, sole jurisdiction, self-regulation, and public service (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Wilensky, 1964). Based on Aiken-Wisniewski et al.'s (2015) discussion, education is defined as the knowledge and theory learned prior to job attainment. Individuals who study and train for a specific profession are defined as experts. Sole jurisdiction is understood as the authority that professionals (i.e., exports) have over their respective profession. As well, the credentials and tasks associated with the job show little variance from institution to institution. Self-regulation refers to the standards, guidelines, and ethical codes that a profession, and professionals within, must follow for certification and/or licensure. Finally, public service is the necessary good or service provided to "potentially vulnerable populations" (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015, p. 62). Though the last criteria – public service – may seem problematic, due to many professions failing to offer necessary goods and services to marginalized communities within capitalistic frameworks, it may be the one criteria that academic advising – like other helping

professions (e.g., teaching and counseling) - meets. However, based on this definition, academic advising is not yet a profession as it still lacks specialization, expertise, and self-regulation (Shaffer et al., 2010). For this reason, as noted earlier, the rhetorical use of "professional" and "profession" is a semantic move to distinguish full-time advising staff from faculty advisors, counselors, and others who contribute to the advising process.

Kuhn and Padak (2008), Shaffer et al. (2010), Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2008), and Aiken-Wisniewski et al. (2015) detailed advising's shortcomings as it relates to the status of "profession." Lack of formal training, scholarship, uniformity, and cohesive language haunts the field, preventing it from reaching the vital distinction of "profession" (Shaffer et al., 2010), and troubles academic advising's professional identity. For example, advisors' varied educational backgrounds and little access to formal advising training, educationally or professionally, contributes to an inability to define the field and their identities as advisors (Larson et al., 2018; Justyna, 2014; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). Additionally, a lack of formal education in the field of academic advising may limit the theoretical perspectives advisors bring to their role (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2015).

Another challenge lies in advisors' unique institutional positions across varied organizational reporting structures across U.S. institutions of higher education. Indeed, how advisors are organized within colleges and universities can have a negative effect on their professional identity. One participant in Epps's (2002) dissertation on advisors' workplace experiences notes the feeling of being on an island and struggling with identity

crisis due to dissonance between one's assigned duties (student affairs work) and one's organizational placement (academic affairs area). Johnson, Larson, and Barkemeyer (2015) found that a majority of advisors often did not view their work as a "profession" according to sociological and historical definitions. Thus, while the interdisciplinary nature of advising allows advisors to be praised for the ever-increasing student retention and student success rates (Schulenburg & Lindhorst, 2008; Habley & McClanahan, 2004), it offers some challenges to professionalization and a cohesive definition of professional identity.

Aiken-Wisniewski et al. (2010) discussed the lack of research engagement by professional academic advisors. Johnson et al. (2015) built upon this point by noting that the majority of advising literature comes from researchers in NACADA, administration, and higher education more generally, who are not practicing advisors. Aiken-Wisniewski et al. (2015) also found that professional advisors often feel powerless in discussions that affect the field due to the lack of specialized degree or certification (i.e., PhD or LPC). These scholars and others continue to argue that increasing scholarship from advising practitioners' perspectives will help the field's professionalization process and further solidify advisors' identity.

While I agree that much more scholarship should come from current and aspiring advisors and that advisors should work to craft a cohesive professional identity, I argue that the tendency to overlook advisors' social-political identities prohibits advisors and scholars alike from fully articulating cohesive (and inclusive) definitions of advising and

advisor identity. For example, Justyna (2014) suggested that advisors with strong professional identities follow five steps for successful "branding" to increase job satisfaction and effectiveness (n.p.). For her, advisors with strong professional identities are experts in their field, have a strong presence, engage in professional networking, are clear about their professional identity, and look to receive feedback (n.p.). However, Justyna does not explicitly consider how advisors' social identities (e.g., race and/or gender) influences advisors' ability to brand themselves or to network. Nor does she fully address the issues mentioned above.

Scholars should consider areas that have major implications for the personal and professional development of all academic advisors when prescribing advice for branding or seeking promotion. Thinking more intersectionally about Justyna's suggestions may lead scholars, leaders, and practitioners in the field to consider the following questions:

- How might considering the impact of race, gender, and class (and other categorizations) influence Justyna's professional branding suggestions?
- How might limited access to formal training and education affect advisors' levels of expertise?
- How might institutional policies and funding negatively affect advisors' access to NACADA membership?
- How might an understanding of WOC's lack of access to mentoring and formal/informal networking change Justyna's approach?

- How does lived experience and cultural worldviews or traditions shape each advisor's strengths, weaknesses, and goals?

These questions may help us investigate advisors' workplace experiences and opportunities (e.g., professional branding) in more nuanced ways.

Advisor Roles, Expectations, & Challenges

Students' success and development remains advisors' primary concern. Once solely a faculty responsibility, academic advising is now a diverse, interdisciplinary, student-centered field (NACADA, 2011) located on the institutional frontlines of higher education institutions. Within this space, advisors serve as experts trained to develop and nurture ongoing relationships with each their advisors as they meet frequently about topics ranging from university policies to course selection to career exploration to personal issues. As Miller (2012) suggested, advisors "teach students how to make the most of their college experience" (n.p.).

Scholars have mapped advisors' purpose, roles, and expectations concerning student integration, retention, and success (Barnes & Austin, 2008; Fichera, 2011; Varma & Hahn, 2007). For instance, as mediators, advisors are the link between their students and the institution, faculty, staff, and parents. As advocates, they act on students' behalf. As enforcers, they uphold institutional policies and practices. As guides, they attempt to help students move along the academic path towards successful matriculation from U.S. institutions of higher education (Kuhn, 2008).

Several studies have discussed the complex job advisors have in juggling multiple roles, responsibilities, and skills to serve their students and their institutions (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Carlstrom & Miller, 2013; Dumas, 2014; Epps 2002). Tuttle (2000) succinctly described a typical advisor's job: "academic advisors are often called on to combine the best of academic and institutional information and personal and career counseling in one thirty-minute session for 300 students each semester" (p. 20). As professionals with interdisciplinary knowledge, advisors are frontline staff who wear many hats—teacher, bridge, mediator, cheerleader, mentor, counselor, advocate, and resource— to ensure retention and success for students across college and university campuses despite limited resources like time and money (Aiken-Wisniewski, 2015; Campbell & Nutt, 2008; Kuhn, 2008; Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Schulenberg & Lindhorst 2008).

One example of advisors' responsibilities includes juggling student/institutional demands with their functional/relational roles and responsibilities in complex environments (Ellis, 2014; Harrison, 2009; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Poolos, 2016; Robbins, 2012). For instance, functional responsibilities may include maintaining academic records and knowing and interpreting policies (e.g., FERPA), helping academically "at-risk" students, facilitating graduation preparation, sitting on various institutional committees, and being knowledgeable of general education requirements (Folsom, Yoder, & Joslin, 2015; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Tuttle, 2000). However, relational responsibilities often includes providing support to students, bridging what

students learn in the classroom to their social and personal development, assisting students in decision-making processes and evaluation of social and academic goals, fostering collaborative relationships with other professionals across the institution, and helping students to find their place at the institutions (Museus & Ravello, 2010).

Folsom (2007) listed 18 characteristic responsibilities of academic advisors. These responsibilities provide a well-informed and comprehensive, though not exhaustive, list of key advisor responsibilities that overlap with the "functional" and "relational" tasks discussed earlier in this study and include:

- Listen, plan, study, share, receive, and ask questions.
- Teach and model decision-making and problem solving.
- Challenge students to do their best and expand their horizons.
- Teach success strategies to students.
- Develop education plans that empower students to achieve their objectives.
- Teach students to navigate the institutional system.
- Assist students in discovering their academic interests.
- Demonstrate resourcefulness.
- Assist students with orientation and registration.
- Keep records of student interactions (one-to-one, group, and online advising).
- Research academic programs and careers.
- Refer students to appropriate resources.

- Advocate to effect policy changes on behalf of students with advising units, academic departments, colleges, and faculty members.
- Collaborate with department and office personnel to implement programs for students.
- Train other advisors.
- Consult with parents.
- Participate in campus events.
- Develop presentations and programs. (p. 44)

Overall, the role of advisors is to know about the college/university where they work, to be problem solvers, and to communicate effectively and authentically (Miller, 2003). Advisors who can juggle their many hats successfully and fulfill the aforementioned responsibilities fit the criteria of "good advising" (Light, 2001).

The Good Advisor

No clear definition of *good advising* exists in academic advising literature (Harrison, 2009). Yet, leaders continue to call for it. Some scholars have outlined definitions and characteristics of good advising and the results of bad advising (Harrison, 2009; Light, 2001), while others have discussed theoretical and practical implications of good and bad advising practices (Jain, Shanahan, & Roe, 2009). Light (2001) offered a definition of good advising as advising that is "tailored to each undergraduate's unique situation-his or her particular background, strengths, areas that need improvement, and hopes and dreams" (p. 85). Advisors must work with students across disciplines and

classifications. They must also facilitate students' academic, social, and personal development. Good advising, then, requires advisors to be supportive, open, and culturally competent, at the very least.

Though there is no universal definition of good advising, almost all scholars agree that good advisors are culturally competent, approachable, empathetic, proactive, supportive, honest, authentic, and highly knowledgeable about advising models, academic programs, and their institution (Chickering, 1993; Ellis, 2014; Harrison, 2009; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Poolos, 2016). A good advisor also takes care of themselves. According to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), advisors should "exhibit personal behaviors that promote a healthy lifestyle" and "exhibit behaviors that advance a healthy campus and community" (n.p.).

The link between good advising and student retention, satisfaction, and success is well known (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Campbell & Nutt, 2008; Freeman, 2008; Light, 2001; Museus & Ravello, 2010). In a case study of Luther College, Alan Lerstrom (2008) describes good advising supports students' development throughout their collegiate experience, a viewpoint congruent with developmental advising models, and often fits the mission of each college and university. That is, good advising is relationship-oriented and student-centered, and good advisors recognize that students needs and identities change over time. Metzner (1989) found that students who perceived receiving "high-quality" advising, or good advising, withdrew at lower rates than those who experienced poor or no advising.

Regarding student development and developmental advising models, scholars consider authenticity – advising and living in alignment with one's value and belief system (Chickering, 1993; Harrison, 2009) – to be paramount in good advising. According to Chickering (1993), as students mature and develop, authentic advisors who humanize advising by being honest about the college process and their own experiences become role models facilitating their increased autonomy, competence, and purpose. However, one major limitation to advising scholars' tendency to demand good advising lies in the fact that good advising is subjective or that advising scholars and leaders tend to only know it when they see it (or, think they see it). Good advising is in the eye of the beholder. A more developed (and universal) definition of good advising could be useful for providing advisors standards that can be followed and measured.

Prior studies also related good academic advising to teaching and learning (Gordon et al., 2008; Hemwall & Trachte 2003; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Lowenstein, 2005). As Folsom's list (2007) suggests, advisors often are tasked with teaching students tangible skills (e.g., study strategies and course selection) and intangible skills (e.g., how to navigate institutional structures and how to overcome academic and/or personal issues) that will contribute to their personal and professional development. However, what advisors teach and how to describe advising remain heavily debated topics (Harrison, 2009; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008).

Scholars have also linked relationship building and care work with good advising and student retention (Hughey, 2011; Jeffreys, 2014; Park, Boman, Care, Edwards, &

Perry, 2008). Hughey (2011) noted that good advisors have the interpersonal skills to demonstrate warmth and support. A study conducted by Museus and Ravello (2010) found a strong link between three practices of good advising and Students of Color's success and retention at PWCU's. First, advisors humanized the academic advising experience by authentically engaging with students and allowing themselves to be seen by and to show care for their students. Second, advisors used multifaceted approaches to ensure that students received necessary support and resources, regardless of the problem. Third, advisors acted proactively to integrate students into campus culture, introducing them to activities, organizations, and other campus resources helpful for academic and social success. Though the participants volunteered themselves and their students for the study, thus limiting its generalizability, it still shows that these practices positively influenced students' experiences. Another major limitation of this study, one that the authors noted, is that there was no consideration of how the intersections of students' identities shaped or informed their experiences, information vital for successfully determining how to assist students. Of equal importance for my study is the fact that no attention was given to how advisors' identities impacted their advising practices, though most of the quotations published came from Advisors of Color and the themes of community, support, and attending to the whole person were prevalent.

Common Challenges and Barriers for Professional Academic Advisors

Differences between institutional types (i.e., two-year, four-year, public, private), geographic location, organizing structure (i.e., centralized, decentralized, or shared), and

reporting structure (i.e., academic affairs, student affairs, shared, or housed in another department) may add to the complex nature of advising work for professional academic advisors' work. Chabinak (2010) suggested that, depending on the institution, academic advising operates under academic affairs or student affairs, between academic affairs and students affairs, or on its own. Since advising is often seen as a space where teaching and professional services takes place, I propose that advising can best be understood as a "third space" (Whitchurch, 2008, 2009)[11], or a space where the blurring of boundaries, activities, and constituencies contributes to multi-layered, intersecting realities of work and identity.

Juggling a myriad of responsibilities with large caseloads, low pay, and high emotional labor within a young field that is often undervalued can increase the complexity of advisors' jobs, contributing to increased work-related stress (Appleby, 2008). As well, lacking the same access to privilege and power as their faculty and administrator counterparts, academic advisors may have fewer opportunities for promotions or tenure (Robbins, 2012) and may be more vulnerable to incidents of discrimination and bias. Academic advisors benefit both students and institutions of higher education. However, institutional demands to enact "good advising" (Light, 2001)

[11] Celia Whitchurch adapts Bhaba's (1990, 1994) concept of "third space" to name and analyze how private and public sectors, such as academic and professional sectors, merge and reconstruct new, liminal spaces with their own "rules and resources". I borrow from Whitchurch's deployment of "third space" in higher education scholarship to focus on academic advisors, professionals that work at the intersection of student affairs and academic affairs to encourage and guide students' holistic development.

in the face of increasing stress and pressure (Teitlebaum, 2000) and decreasing resources may prove taxing for academic advisors—particularly, WOC whose experiences of racial and gender discrimination and oppression may compound such stress (Turner, 2002).

Research on Professional Academic Advisors of Color

Little research exists on the experiences of Students of Color who utilize advising services or on the experiences of Advisors of Color, and no research exists on WOC professional advisors. Recently, advising scholars have acknowledged the necessity of recognizing Students' of Color unique emotional, mental, social, and academic demands, and the need for cultural competency training in advising professional development and education. A handful of studies have considered how all advisors might better engage with and help Students of Color to increase their persistence, retention, and success—particularly at PWCUs (Carnaje, 2016; Clark & Kalionzes, 2008; Coll & Zalaquett, 2007; Lee, 2009; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Rouse, 2011). Museus and Ravello (2010) suggested that advisors should enact a holistic, proactive, and humanized approach when assisting Students of Color. Tolerance and acceptance of all students, regardless of identities, is also crucial for good advising (Hagen & Jordan, 2008). These findings confirm prior research suggesting that all advisors work to develop relationships of trust and understanding, communicate openly and authentically, promote equality, validate students' cultural backgrounds, and increase their multicultural competency and awareness as useful tools, are significant.

Many scholars have called for increased cultural competence and sensitivity training (Cuyjet, 2006; Museus & Ravello, 2010), as they have found that a lack of cultural understanding generally undermines communication (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). For instance, Sue and Sue (1990) found that communication problems such as misinterpretation could be the result of cultural differences. More recently, Mitchell, Wood, and Witherspoon (2010) proposed culturally responsive advising as one potentially culturally competent and sensitive approach to alleviating issues such advisor-advisee communication problems.

As a best practice, cultural competency – respect for and understanding of racial/ethnic groups' (and other identities) values, practices, experiences, and histories (Bush, 2000) – is a necessity for both staff and students. Cultural competency is While developing cultural competency is challenging, institutional agents (and students) must develop the necessary set of skills to engage and understand people across differences, build bridges between institutions and individuals, and understand how power relations impact and shaper individuals' experiences, beliefs, and behaviors. However, two issues that culturally competent practice cannot eradicate completely are the lack of trust between Students of Color and White academic advisors and the desire Students of Color have for advisors who look like them (though they are currently few in number) (Mitchell et al., 2010; Willie & McCord, 1972). Distrust is rooted in marginalized students' negative experiences of racism, discrimination, bias, and stereotyping by White faculty, staff, and administrators (Cuyjet, 2006; Strayhorn, 2012). These experiences, combined

with higher education's history of racist policies and practices, can result in students reading the bodies of White institutional agents as enforcers of continued discrimination and oppression (Mitchell et al., 2010).

Though it focuses on faculty advisors and African American male students, Strayhorn's (2012) study speaks to this distrust. Strayhorn found that 88% of his participants who classified as high-achieving experienced stereotypes from White advisors (e.g., pressure to prove themselves regardless of prior academic accomplishments), leading to disengagement and distrust. The findings also indicated that the faculty advisors did, in fact, hold stereotypical views of Black male students, in turn leading students to avoid the advisor, experience a decline in academic performance, and disengage from their university. Steele and Aronson (1995) linked such consequences to discrimination and stereotype threat. According to Steele and Aronson (1995), stereotype threat is the threat of others viewing an individual through negative stereotypes associated with the individual's social group. Stereotype threat can negatively affect individuals if they conform to such stereotypes made about their social group. Stereotype threat can also negatively affect individuals if they do not conform to the stereotypes held about their social group. Distrust and stereotype threat could hinder Students of Color from disclosing important personal information about themselves and their experiences that may be beneficial to facilitating their academic success (Museus & Neville, 2012; Strayhorn, 2014). For example, Students of Color may not share about instances of discrimination with White advisors for fear of having their experiences minimized or

being met with misunderstanding. Or, students may fear experiencing discrimination due to advisors' unchecked biases and stereotypes.

Students' distrust for White advisors and their desire for Advisors (and other institutional agents) of Color are also rooted in a desire for commonality. Students of Color and Educators of Color cherish their shared cultural backgrounds, issues, and struggles unique to their experiences—especially, at predominantly White institutions. Confirming the benefits of shared backgrounds, Museus and Neville (2012) found that one key characteristic of positive institutional agents (though defined broadly as faculty, staff, and administrators) for Students of Color were those who shared common ground through shared racial and/or cultural background, common experiences, and/or common knowledge about the students' experiences. While commonalities in racial and/or cultural backgrounds do not automatically guarantee positive advisor-advisee relationships, they do help Students of Color in retention, persistence, and success, and mitigate students' fear of being misunderstood, stereotyped, or discriminated against (Museus & Nevill, 2012; Museus & Quaye, 2009). Unfortunately, outside of these studies, scholars pay little attention to Student of Color experiences in academic advising. Further, much of this scholarship does not focus on Advisors of Color experiences and perceptions. Some scholars, like Carnaje (2016), have called for more research on Students of Color and Advisors of Color perspectives. Museus and Neville's (2012) work is, indeed, a contribution to deepening our understanding of advisors' impact on Students of Color.

However, a dearth of studies on the experiences of Advisors of Color remains (Henderson, 1986; Kim, 2014; Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2010).

Attention to Advisors of Color's own perceptions of their distinct experiences at the intersection of marginalized identities and professional identity could help scholars better understand advisors' practices, ideologies, understandings of intersectionality and cultural competence, and relationships with colleagues and students within the context of higher education. Further, more attention to Advisors of Color perspectives and experiences could be beneficial for creating more inclusive interventions that contribute to all advisors' professional development, advising models and practices (and, therefore, student success), and well-being. Additionally, intersectional approaches to advising research can provide deeper analysis of advisor-advisee relationships, advisor experiences, and advisee experiences in ways that do not overlook individuals who hold multiple marginalized identities. The tendency to ignore the intersections of multiple identities and the systems and practices that create inequality limits our full understanding of students' and advisors' work experiences and relationships within the realm of academic advising.

Currently, to my knowledge, no scholarship is available on the experiences of advisors at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. Most research on Advisors of Color focuses on Black academic advisors. Mitchell and Rosiek (2005) presents Black advisors' distinct epistemological standpoint as a strength that enriches the experiences and knowledge(s) of their students, colleagues, and institutions. Kim (2014) and

Henderson (1986) confirm these findings. Kim (2014) contended that Black advisors facilitate success by serving as "cultural mediators" (589) between students and their faculty and institution. That is, Black advisors share truths and wisdom that facilitate Black students' integration into the college and help them learn the norms, values, and behaviors of mainstream college culture.

Several scholars argue that while Advisors of Color positively impact the field and their institutions with their unique knowledge, they struggle to balance their "outsider-within" (Collins, 2000) status as minority bodies working within historically dominant institution (Henderson, 1986; Kim, 2014; et al., 2010). Mitchell et al., (2010) noted that Advisors of Colors' desires and attempts to utilize more culturally-aligned advising models (e.g., developmental and intrusive) may be dismissed and replaced by institutional demands for prescriptive advising models. The authors suggest that complicity resulting from one's professional duties and institutional policies may leave Advisors of Color perpetuating Whiteness, or the "embodiment[s] of the prevailing (White supremacist) institutional discourses stealthily packaged in brown, red, or yellow flesh" (p. 300). In other words, the authors suggest that while Advisors of Color share the same lived realities of race-based discrimination and oppression as their students, they are likely to enact policies and procedures detrimental to their Students of Color. As a result, Advisors of Color may experience tension between personal and professional identities.

Where are the WOC Advisors?

Laser-like focus on field development and student and faculty perspectives has left a major gap in our knowledge of academic advising: professional advisors' voices and experiences (Epps, 2002; Klusmeier, 2017). Indeed, Aiken-Wisniewski et al. (2010) confirmed this point when they concluded that advisors' experiences remain under-theorized and misunderstood despite the major growth in number of advisors that occurs yearly. However, though scholars and advisors alike lament the missing voices and experiences of advising practitioners, a dearth of research exploring advisors' experiences remains. Noted in the previous section, scholarship focusing on the intersection of (marginalized) identities and professional experience in advising is scarce. To date, no research focuses on the experiences of WOC professional advisors.

In the last fifteen years, higher education doctoral programs have produced graduates who also have backgrounds in academic advising. Recognizing the lack of scholarship on advisors drove several of scholars at the intersection of higher education and advising to conduct more research that focuses on professional academic advisors' experiences. Conducting one of the earliest qualitative studies on professional advisors' workplace experiences, advisor Susan Epps (2002) specifically cited the lack of research on advisors' experiences and their "connection, retention, academic, and emotional needs" (p. 11) as motivation for her study.

Epps' work is crucial because she explored the elements of job satisfaction, relationships with colleagues, commitment to the organization, performance, variety, and

autonomy to provide a more holistic view of professional advisors' experiences. She highlighted advisors' overall positive work experiences, positive relationships with other advisors, and strong commitment to providing quality advising and support for students. Consistent with prior research on the complexity of advising in general, Epps found that advisors faced major challenges in the workplace. Challenges included the redundancy of bureaucratic responsibilities (e.g., paperwork); role conflict and role strain (e.g., committee work; student demands; paperwork); work-related stress (e.g., scheduling issues, summer work; long days; high volume caseloads); lack of professional development and promotional opportunities; issues with organizational structure (location of advising position); and shortage of resources.

While Epps' study facilitates a deeper understanding of advisors' experiences, inattention to the difference that (identity) difference makes limits her study. For example, literature on WOC experiences in higher education continually shows that racism and sexism compound stress at work (Turner et al., 2002). Ultimately, Epps recognized this gap in her work and suggested that a "quantitative section could be added for analysis of responses by various demographics, such as work setting, gender, age, and education level" (p. 95). Such work is important. However, as Lisa Bowleg (2008) noted, quantitative methodological approaches "make it virtually impossible to ask questions about intersectionality that are not inherently additive" (p. 314). Using an intersectional, qualitative approach to account for the advisors' demographic identities will be useful in exploring the nuances in professional advisors' experiences.

Another vital study on professional advisors' experiences is Nadler's (2007) dissertation, exploring how advisors understand and make sense of their experiences with students in the act of advising and relationship building, or what she calls advisors "doing" advising. Recognizing the shortage of research on professional advisors' experiences, she interrogates advisors' role as co-creators in students' experiences and development. Using the metaphor of building a house, Nadler shows how her participants emphasized the importance of cultivating deep, dynamic advisor-advisee relationships that are student-led, committed to practices of human connection and caring, and strengthened through continued professional development. She argues that opting for these strategies over expediency can help advisors to understand more deeply their "calling", the phenomenon of academic advising.

One of many recent interrogations of advisors' experiences, Nadler's study offers the important perspectives of advising practitioners, perspectives that can help the field strengthen its scholarship and improve academic advising models and best practices (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2010). For the purposes of this study, Nadler's work is also vital because it offers a small glimpse into WOC professional advisors' experiences. In Michelle's case, as a WOC professional advisor in her mid-twenties and a young Black mother, we see how WOC multiple marginalized identities (e.g., race, gender, early motherhood) affect their advising experiences.

Michelle acknowledged how her specialized knowledge, as a young Black mother, informed her advising practice and her work as a cultural and academic bridge

for Black students and students who are young mothers. By meeting with Black students to talk about advising (and, sometimes, just talk), Michelle disrupted myths Black students held about academic advising by making advising "accessible and acceptable" for them (p. 129). Though the totality of Michelle's identities and unique experiences as a young Black mother allowed her to relate to Students of Color, Michelle also made concerted effort to provide Students of Color a safe space where they could discuss academic and non-academic issues and see a friendly familiar face. She modeled resilience as a young Black mother who made it through college successfully. In these ways, Michelle was able to act as a change agent and advocate for her students. Yet, while we learn much from Nadler's limited description of Michelle's advising, it may also be illuminating to examine how Michelle might understand her complicity in perpetuating higher education's negative effects on Students of Color though her position as a professional academic advisor.

Overall, Nadler's discussion of Michelle's experiences (though limited to only the first interview) demonstrates one aspect of WOC's roles as agents of change, transformative in their lives of their students and within their institutions. Her perspective is consistent with prior research on WOC in higher education. However, as the literature on WOC experiences in higher education suggests, triumphant experiences of speaking truth to power and serving as "the only one" are both the result of marginalization and underrepresentation and part of WOC resistance work. As a result, cultural taxation (Padilla, 1994), or the unique burden of serving as role models, change agents, mentors,

and surrogate guardians, may be part of WOC advisors experiences. One goal of this study is to interrogate how WOC navigate such practices of complicity, resistance, and transformation within the advising space.

Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality

Central to Feminist of Color and Womanist critique is the concept of intersectionality. Scholars have recognized intersectionality as an epistemology, metaphor, analytical lens, research paradigm, and social justice tool (Carastathis, 2014; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989/1991; Hancock, 2016; McCall, 2005). As well, many scholars have engaged in intersectional thinking and problem solving (see: Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Puar, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006). At its core, the premise of intersectionality is that identities (and their accompanying oppressions) are not separate, theoretically or in reality, but inherently interconnected (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). For example, women experience gender in raced, classed, and sexualized ways (Shields, 2008). Such complex networks - also known as systems of power - shape how minoritized people experience and are experienced in the world (Collins, 2000). Though race, gender, and class, may not be the only systems of oppression faced by humans (e.g., xenophobia, sexuality, religion, etc.), this particular constellation of oppression has great impact on WOC's lived experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

Brief History

Growing from a dissatisfaction with single-issue social movements and theories (i.e., feminist, anti-racist, anti-classist), Feminist-of-Color scholars invoked the concept of intersectionality to argue that a failure to acknowledge the intersection of individuals' multiple identities renders them invisible and invalidates human experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Collins, 2000; Collins & Bilge, 2016; hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984). Within the United States, scholars commonly trace the earliest conceptualizations of intersectionality back to Black feminist tradition (Crenshaw, 1989; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Some fundamental building blocks include the speeches of early Black feminists such as Anna Julia Cooper, Sojourner Truth, and Maria Stewart (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Hancock, 2016). Scholars such as Collins and Bilge (2016) and Hancock (2016) note that Maria Stewart originally articulated the concept of intersectionality in her writings in 1831. Other critical insights include, but are not limited to, Frances Beal's theory of double jeopardy (1970); the Combahee River Collective's Black feminist statement (Collective, 1981); Audre Lorde's (1984) theorizations of difference; and Deborah King's article title "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness" (1988). In these works, Black feminist highlighted the fundamental connection between racism and sexism, demonstrating that identities (and the systems in which they function) are neither separate nor discreet (May, 2015).

Evolution and Definition

Black feminist, critical legal scholar, and attorney, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term "intersectionality" into academia in the late 1980s as a metaphor to locate and articulate the historical experiences of erasure, silence, and violence that befell Black women due to their multiple marginalized identities. Specifically, Crenshaw employed the concept of intersectionality to address the U.S. legal system's problematic practice of inaccurately viewing race and gender as discrete categories. Under intersectionality, she named and analyzed the negative outcomes for Black women in both the legal and political system in the United States.

As articulated in Crenshaw's "Mapping the Margins" (1991), intersectionality occurs in three distinct ways for Black women (and other WOC): structurally, politically, and representatively. First, structural intersectionality is concerned with the impact that social institutions make on individuals' access to opportunities (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). For example, by not attending to WOC's unique experiences, institutions such as domestic abuse shelters may turn away non-English speaking women or overlook the immediate housing and employment needs of WOC who often face disparate wealth, education, labor, and child-care conditions (Crenshaw, 1991). Such experiences are similar within higher education as racial and gender oppressions intersect to create shape WOC's experiences.

Second, political intersectionality is concerned with the ways conflicting political agendas of race and gender negatively affect and exclude WOC (Crenshaw, 1991, p.

1245). Often in anti-racist and feminist movements, respectively, WOC's unique needs and experiences are overlooked in favor of larger Black or White women's communities. Further, WOC encounter racism in feminist spaces and sexism in anti-racist spaces. For example, Black male advisors may refuse to address issues of misogyny and misogynoir, a unique type of misogyny that negatively affects Black women, to avoid negative public opinion about Communities of Color.

Third, representational intersectionality is concerned with how racist and sexist discourse and understandings of Black women create (mis)representations and controlling images of Black women (and other WOC) that negatively influence their lives (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1283). Such (mis)representations are weaponized against WOC higher education professionals in the form of stereotypes, challenges to authority, and presumption of incompetence. The elements provide foundational assumptions for scholars using intersectionality across disciplines.

Many conceptualizations and applications of intersectionality have emerged across and outside of academia. Within women's and gender studies and feminist theory, as well as other disciplines generally, intersectionality has come to signify that people—particularly, women—are simultaneously impacted by race, gender, and class, as well as other systems of oppression (Collins, 2000; Davis, 2008; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). Outside of Women's and Gender Studies, scholars such as Black feminist sociologist, Patricia Hill Collins extended the conceptualization of intersectionality. Attending to power, Collins (2000) argued that intersectionality occurs within larger

systems of interlocking oppressions that form the social structures that create social positions. For Collins (2000), intersectionality speaks to the social location of individuals and groups and the meaning and experiences that emerge from these unique positions, while macro-level systems of interlocking oppressions shape, order, and complicate individual and collective experience. Thus, for Collins (2000), intersectionality and interlocking oppressions work together within a larger, overarching site of power to shape oppression.

Psychologist, Lisa Bowleg (2012) combined the work of Crenshaw and Collins in her definition of intersectionality's key tenets, as it relates to public health. She presents the following tenets:

(1) "Social identities are not independent and unidimensional but are multiple and intersecting.

(2) People from multiple historically oppressed and marginalized groups are the focal or starting point.

(3) Multiple social identities at the micro level (i.e., intersections of race, gender, and SES) intersect with macro level structural factors (i.e., poverty, racism, and sexism) to illustrate or produce disparate health outcomes." (p. 7)

Similarly, higher education scholars, Bonnie Dill and Ruth Zambrana (2009) state that intersectionality's analytic tasks are:

(1) "Placing the lived experiences and struggles of People of Color and other marginalized groups as a starting point for the development of theory.

(2) Exploring the complexities not only of individual identities but also group identity, recognizing that variations within groups are often ignored and essentialized.

(3)Unveiling the ways interconnected domains of power organize and structure inequality and oppression.

(4) Promoting social justice and social change by linking research and practice to create a holistic approach to the eradication of disparities and to changing social and higher education systems." (p.5)

For Dill and Zambrana (2009) and Bowleg (2012), intersectionality's centering of those with multiple marginalized identities is a (transformative) starting point because social groups with two or more marginalized identities are often the most overlooked. As the scholars' definitions show, intersectionality does not assume additive notions of oppression (or privilege) and it does not stay focused "only on Black women" as some would suggest. Rather, intersectionality helps us understand the complex relationship between power and oppression - as it operates through social identities, interactions, and contexts – and creates disadvantage and advantage.

Following the aforementioned scholars, I define intersectionality as a theoretical framework and analytic tool that helps us understand and address the diverse ways in which identities of difference (and their accompanying oppressions) interact and intersect in the lives, relationships, ideologies, and surroundings, of individuals to create complex human experiences and inform life outcomes in terms of power. In this definition lies three assumptions. First, we have a better understanding of theory and human experience

when we start from a space of multiple marginality, or the place of the unknown and unnamed. Second, power organizes who gets what and who goes where (and how). Third, at the intersections of identities and experiences lies opportunity for agency, new knowledge(s), and transformation. While this definition may seem broad, I use the aforementioned tenets to guide this study.

Debates & Contestations

As intersectionality evolves, scholars debate its utility. Opponents criticize the theory's ambiguity and inconsistency (Davis, 2008; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). For instance, as mentioned earlier in this section, scholars have defined intersectionality as an approach, an analysis, a lens, an epistemological practice, a method, a research paradigm, a political orientation, a theoretical framework, a perspective. Critics also argue that intersectionality is too attentive to some subjects or identities (e.g., Black women) and not others (White men; class) (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; May, 2015). Furthermore, scholars have debated over:

- who should be the focus of intersectionality studies (see: Ferree, 2009; Hindman, 2011; Nash, 2013);
- how intersectionality should be studied and measured (see: Bowleg, 2008, 2012; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005);
- at what level (micro, meso, or macro) intersectionality functions (see: Carastathis, 2014); and

- how to overcome the (supposed) ambiguous and complicated nature of intersectionality theory (Davis, 2008).

Supporters of intersectionality scold critics for not engaging seriously or fully with intersectionality on its terms, decisions that result in co-optation, flattening, and distortion (Carastathis, 2014; May, 2015; Tomlinson, 2013). Proponents also critique the citation practice of giving "compulsory acknowledgement, often in the form of a single citation, to [Crenshaw's] work" (Carastathis, 2014, p. 311). One result of distortion and misappropriation is the tendency of scholars to criticize intersectionality by using dualistic, binary, and either/or logic (e.g., scholars who use gender-first or class-first critiques) or attempting to separate the individual (lived experiences) from their contexts (systems of oppression/structural constraints). For such critics, Barbara Tomlinson's (2013) response is simple: "If critics think intersectionality is a matter of identity rather than power, they cannot see which differences make a difference. Yet it is exactly our analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance" (p. 1012). Tomlinson's remarks result from the belief that intersectionality, and thinking intersectionally should not be seen as synonymous with thinking about intersecting categories of identity, although the two can (and do) often overlap. Scholars choose to study and/or critique intersectionality based on the latter (i.e., identity categories), reify dominant logic, and ultimately dismiss and erase WOC contributions and knowledge(s).

Intersectionality & Academic Advising

Collins' (2000) and Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) pioneering work on intersectionality provided a way for understanding and addressing the complexity of human experience, particularly those of Black women and other WOC. Although intersectionality is a staple in Women's and Gender Studies, its newness and slipperiness in the field of advising reduces it to buzzword status. To move intersectionality from its current and erroneous placement in buzzword territory back to its powerful status as an analytical tool with change power, a study about the intersectional experiences of WOC advisors using intersectionality as its guiding framework is necessary.

Utilizing an intersectional approach is effective for understanding how interconnecting systems of power shape the experiences of WOC in advising. Grounding this work in a WOC-created and WOC-centered framework of intersectionality required me, as a researcher, to ask fundamentally different questions about advisors' experiences during the conception of this study. As a critical theory, intersectionality focuses on: 1) acknowledging and addressing the unique inequities faced by multiply-marginalized peoples, and 2) empowering these groups to transcend the systems of power by which they are subjugated (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). As a result, I could not stop at the question "what are advisors' lived experiences?". Rather, implementing intersectionality in the current study meant moving forward using several questions adopted from intersectionality scholars in varying fields (e.g., education,

psychology, women's and gender studies). For the purpose of this study, I found Cole's (2009) three questions helpful for diving into intersectional research.

According to intersectional scholars like Cole (2009) and Crenshaw (1989, 1991), the question "Who is included and who is missing?" is the first important question to ask. Such a question is concerned with making sure that scholars do not overlook in-group difference and that historically erased voices have the opportunity to be heard. Questions that emerged for me relating to this study included: What are the experiences of advisors at the intersections of multiply marginalized identities? Why has the field of advising (slowly) taken up the call to explore SOC's (and other marginalized student groups) experiences but not consider the experiences of Advisors of Color who share similar experiences of bias and discrimination? What might we gain from WOC advisors' insights? How might WOC advisors offer the field fuller understandings of identity, social justice, and employee and student experiences and needs? Following my own intuition, asking this question, and turning to the scholarship led me to WOC in advising.

The second most important question to ask is "What role does inequality play [in the lives of WOC advisors]?" Intersectional scholars such as Else-Quest and Hyde (2016) and Collins (2000) continue to remind us that larger structural forces shape and inform identity, and how we perceive, experience, and understand identity. Questions that emerged for me relating to this study included: How does by power and oppression permeate and inform advising? How do WOC perpetuate and/or resist the practices and ideology found within higher education contexts?

Finally, the third question, "What are the similarities [between WOC]?", reminds scholars to look for commonalities within groups. Groups have shared experiences (and meanings about their experiences) across shared cultural background. For WOC, collective consciousness helps to create new knowledge(s), form strong individual and collective identification(s) and bonds that promote physical and psychic health, and allow for empowerment and resistance through solidarity. Questions that emerged for me relating to this study included: How do WOC understand themselves, their students and colleagues, and their roles as professional academic advisors? What similarities do they see between themselves and everyone around them? What are the shared experiences of WOC advisors? How do they protect and care for themselves as academic advisors?

By centering and elevating their voices, this research affirms WOC advisors' dynamic presence in the field of advising and interrupts current dominant narratives that (perhaps unintentionally) push a "one-size-fits-all" approach. By asking, "What difference does difference make?", an intersectional approach to this study gave me a framework for exploring, analyzing, and addressing difference and inequality in WOC advisors' experiences.

Summary

This chapter critically analyzed and described a selection of scholarship relevant to the study. While scholars have studies many aspects of advising and WOC's experiences in higher education separately, few if any have studied WOC academic advisors. Who are WOC advisors? How do WOC advisors navigate the institutions they

serve? What are WOC advisors tools of resistance, survival, and coping? How do WOC advisors perceive their relationships with their students and colleagues? Such questions are important to answer if we are to know the unique experiences and needs of WOC advisors and the students they serve, particularly those students who look like them in a time where diversity is increasing within both higher education contexts and society. The overall aim in studying WOC professional advisors is to gain insight and reveal how the intersection of race and gender (among other identities) influence their approaches to advising, their relationships with their colleagues and students, their interaction with and response to institutional policies and practices that both affect them and their marginalized students in similar ways, and their overall experience.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This chapter presents the methodology used to explore the shared experiences of WOC academic advisors at public higher education institutions. Intersectionality was the theoretical framework used to ground this study. An intersectional approach, paired with a phenomenological methodology, allowed a fuller understanding of WOC professional academic advisors' lived experiences. The chapter begins with a brief rationale for the research design. A brief description of phenomenology follows. Then, I reflect on my orientation to the phenomenon and the accompanying presuppositions regarding the study. Finally, I describe recruitment, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Data collection occurred through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes.

Qualitative Discovery

Since the late 20th century, qualitative research has received increased recognition for addressing issues of social injustice and equity—particularly in the social sciences and helping professions (Creswell, 2013; Denzin, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) noted that qualitative work "involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" (p. 3). Specifically, qualitative research provides the opportunity to explore and think critically about how people engage with and make meaning of their experiences and

world (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Glesne, 2011; Holliday, 2010). Thus, qualitative research is most appropriate for studying human experience and behavior in social context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002; Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011).

Phenomenology

German philosophers Edmund Husserl (descriptive/transcendental) and Martin Heidegger created a version of phenomenological methodology (hermeneutical/interpretive) to study lived experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Moustakas (1994) stated, "Phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences" (p. 58). van Manen (1990) suggested, phenomenology asks the question: *what does it mean to be human?* Thus, researchers using phenomenology seek to explore, interpret, and describe common life experiences at "face value" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 29).

Specifically, the focus of a phenomenological approach is on the interrelationship between meaning and experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Scholars gain deeper understanding of phenomena not explored or not fully understood using open-ended questions. Thus, a phenomenological approach is a commitment to understanding social phenomena based on individuals' perspectives as told in their own voice (Glesne, 2011). Phenomenology as a methodology was useful for revealing and describing WOC advisors' experiences, as it allows participants to explain their experiences for themselves.

Protection of Human Participants: Institutional Review Board

Upon the approval of my study by my committee, I submitted the research proposal for the current study to the Texas Woman's University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The board reviewed and approved the application, which included a brief description and overview of the study, procedural discussion of recruitment and data collection and analysis, and an outline of the steps taken to ensure safe storage of the data collected. The application also included the following supplemental materials: eligibility screening and interview protocols, a consent form, and measures for minimizing risks and maintain confidentiality.

Participants

This qualitative study focused on WOC professional academic advisors across Texas. According to scholars like Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2013), phenomenological studies need only three to ten individuals to capture meaning participants make about a shared phenomenon nine academic advisors were interviewed about the phenomenon of serving as WOC professional academic advisors. I used interviews as the method to capture fully their experiences.

To be eligible for the study, participants needed to meet the following criteria:

1. Self-identifies as a WOC.
2. Is a professional academic advisor, based on the definition provided, and works within academic advising.
3. Has at least one year of experience in their current position.

For the purposes of this study, I did not focus on faculty advisors, counselors, or other staff who may contribute to the advising process. Due to their institutional roles and responsibilities, they do not devote all of their time to advising practice.

Why Texas?

I chose Texas for two primary reasons. First, my introduction to academic advising and the experiences of WOC, specifically Black women, academic advisors occurred in Texas. First learning about the field of advising and Black women's experiences in the field as a Black girl and now hoping to enter the field as a professional Black transmyn increases the significance of this study for me. Learning the stories of marginalized peoples across the institution so that I can lead with intention and care for the WOC professionals and students who I will work alongside is (self-) healing work. It also increases my awareness of and my resistance against power relations that create unique barriers and challenges for all of us. As a Black queer trans higher education professional with hopes of becoming a higher education administrator in Texas, this study empowers me to remain committed to the freedom work of uncovering and elevating WOC's stories and holding space whenever the opportunity arises. I am my mother's, my grandmothers', my aunties', my friends', and my sisters' keeper.

Second, Texas is one of four growing minority-majority states (Aaronson, 2012). However, higher education professionals are often White while ALANA higher education professionals remain underrepresented and student populations become

increasingly diverse. It is important that scholars conduct more research on the unique experiences of students and institutional agents of Color.

Procedure

I received approval from Texas Woman's University Human Subjects Institutional Review. *Request for Assistance* emails (see Appendix A) were sent to key administrators and staff at Texas public higher education institutions to gather help in distributing the recruitment email (see Appendix B) to academic advisors across Texas. Recruitment emails see (Appendix B) were sent directly to all academic advisors, allowing them to self-identify and opt in or opt out of the study. The initial recruitment email (see Appendix B) and follow-up email (see Appendix C) included the purpose of the study, eligibility requirements, and my email address.

Due to the open nature of participant self-identification of race and gender, every advisor in the state of Texas received an email invitation to participate in the study with the opportunity to opt out if they did not fit the criteria. I utilized the NACADA, TEXAAN, and Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) websites' search functions to find public Texas universities and colleges. Then I mined general academic advising and college major departmental websites for academic advisors email addresses. I also utilized institutional organizational charts and departmental websites to contact advising administrators and institutional administrators more broadly (e.g., Deans and Associate Deans if necessary) to request for their assistance in forwarding the *Invitation*

to Participate to their employees. As a result, over 200 advisors in the state of Texas received an invitation and over half responded.

There was mixed reception to the call for participation, with White men often being the most vocally offended by the recruitment email[12]. Some White women also expressed sentiment such as "I'm a color just not the one you want". Given the current (and most) political moments in US history and my experience in Women's and Gender Studies classrooms, the responses were expected[13]. I know well how triggering discussions of race and gender can become. Thus, much of my bridling began during the process of recruitment when I had to wrestle with assumptions about potential responses from non-WOC.

WOC advisors strongly identified with the call, leaving me almost 50 potential participants to be screened by telephone. Those WOC advisors interested in participating in the study contacted me via email as instructed in the invitation to participate. I followed up with interested advisors to schedule phone screenings. The purpose of the phone screening was to verify eligibility. During the screening, I used a script to explain the study (Appendix D), read the consent form (Appendix E), and answered all questions. Only two questions were asked repeatedly: 1) *Why WOC professional academic advisors?*, and 2) *Please repeat the definition for race*. The latter question often brought

[12] For an example, visit: https://orthosphere.wordpress.com/2018/08/23/for-the-education-of-White-girls/

[13] I actually expected more negative feedback given that this study is conducted in Texas. However, the majority of advisors who declined did so with grace often citing that they did not identify as WOC due to their race or gender.

laughter from WOC who overwhelmingly expressed gratitude for and enthusiasm about the study. By the end of the phone screening, 27 WOC professional academic advisors were considered eligible for the study. The other 23 WOC were not eligible due to either location or not fitting the criteria of time in position. I scheduled technology checks and interviews with eligible participants during the phone screenings.

Prior to technology checks, I sent a request for signed consent forms (see Appendix F). Participants were instructed to scan and email one copy of the consent form to me and keep one copy for themselves. During this stage, the final count for participants became nine. It is possible that advisors' busy work schedules in September and October explain the loss of participants. I attempted to follow up with advisors who did not return the consent form through either email or phone call. However, few responded. Consequently, with the signed consent form from the nine advisors, I moved on to technology checks.

I contacted participants by email or text to confirm and remind them about the technology check and their interviews (see Appendix G; Appendix H). Technology checks and interviews were held using video conferencing technology (e.g., Google Hangout, Skype, and Zoom). Using video conferencing technology allowed participants the choice to participate from any space that ideally afforded comfort and the protection of their confidentiality. Such digital formats overcame the confines of expense, geographic location, and scheduling difficulties for both researcher and participants (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour 2014; Seitz, 2016).

Overall, participants expressed enthusiasm and gratitude for the study during varying stages (e.g., phone screening, the end of interviews, etc.). For example, several of the participants, and those women who could not continue with the study due to scheduling conflicts, either immediately began sharing their frustrations and experiences during the phone screening stage or expressed sentiments such as "Oh, I've got a lot to share" or "I just felt that what you said about being Ethnic and a woman totally fit who I am" during technology checks and the interviews. Many also asked about my motivations for engaging in this research. I often shared that my mother and other WOC advisors' stories, missing from scholarship, were my motivation.

Data Collection: Interviewing Participants

All interviews occurred digitally via videoconferencing software. I brought an audio recorder, a backup recorder, pen, pencil, paper, and consent form (see Appendix E). At the beginning of the interview, I revisited the consent form and checked in with each participate regarding any questions they had. If there were questions, I answered them. Participants were reminded that they could take breaks, as needed, and that the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without fear of consequence.

I asked participants for permission to audio record the interview session. All participants' agreed to be recorded. With participants' permission to audio-record the interview, I began the interview. I utilized a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix I) to conduct the interview (see Table 1). During interviews, I took field notes

to help me recall key responses, nonverbal communication, researcher observations, emotions, and transitions (Merriam, 2009). Participants were encouraged to speak freely and ask questions.

Table 1

Interview Questions

Interview Questions	How do you identify? How long have you been in the field of academic advising? Probe: How long have you been advising at (insert institution)? What brought you to the profession of academic advising? Probe: How did your identity as a (insert race) woman impact your decision to enter the field of academic advising? Please describe what being an academic advisor means to you. Probe: How is your advising approach and style impacted by your lived experiences as a (insert race) woman? What brought you to (insert institution)? Probe: What factors did you consider when searching for colleges and universities to work at? Probe: How did your identity as a (insert race) woman impact your decision to work at (insert institution)? Probe: How has your advising approach and advising style been influenced or changed by working at (insert institution)? How would you describe your current role as an academic advisor? (nature of the role, official title, current responsibilities, reporting line, overall institutional organizational structure) Please describe a "typical day" for you in your current position. (Describe your working conditions, i.e., compensations, resources, hours spent at the job, support, and etcetera.)

	What do you feel are the unique challenges or disadvantages of being a (insert race) woman advisor in your department? University? What do you feel are the unique opportunities or benefits of being a (insert race) woman advisor in your department? University? In what ways do you believe your experiences are different from or similar to your: • White men colleagues? • White women colleagues? • Men of Color colleagues? • WOC colleagues? Please describe how being a (insert race) woman affects: • Your professional relationship with the students you serve. How does this make you feel? • Your professional relationship with your colleagues. How do you feel about this? • Your professional relationships with other campus partners (i.e., other staff, faculty members, administrators). How do you feel about this? Please describe how you manage or cope with challenges and barriers. Where do you receive support in your personal and professional life? How do you balance work, family, and/or other obligations in your life? In what ways do you try to be an agent of significant change for your students? Probe: What barriers do you face in trying to be an agent of significant change for your students? Do you view yourself as a role model for Students of Color on your campus? Probe: If so, in what ways do you try to reach out to and connect with them? Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years? How do you see yourself getting there? What advice would you give to future WOC advisors? What advice or wisdom would you like to share with current WOC in advising? If you had endless resources available to enhance the support for WOC advisors, what would you change?

	If you were the Vice President of your division, how would you change advising? If you were designing it, what would your ideal advising office/center look like? Probe: How would it feel? What would be the experience for WOC advisors? Is there anything I didn't ask that you would like to talk about today?

At the conclusion of the interview, I turned off the audio recorder and asked the participant if they have any questions. If they had questions, I answered them. Each interview lasted about 100 minutes. I asked participants if they would like to participate in member-checking and follow-up interviews. All participants agreed to participate in member-checking. Each member-checking email (see Appendix J) came with follow-up questions (if necessary) and a clean draft of the transcribed interview.

To ensure protection of participants' identities, I used a combination of pseudonyms and numbers instead of names on the interview files. I worked with my participants to create pseudonyms that would help ensure confidentiality to protect their identities. All names and identities of persons, locations, and events that participants referenced were altered. To further ensure participants' protection, all interview files were stored in two places: 1) password protected laptop; and 2) a locked file cabinet on a USB file.

Though participants did not express any reservations about being recorded, three participants did share their anxieties about confidentiality. Such fears about confidentiality are valid for all participants, but become increasingly important for marginalized groups who may be one of few or the only one in their office. Lost

confidentiality can jeopardize WOC's job security or strain their relationships with their colleagues. Thus, I attempted to take several precautions to protect their identities. Their fears lessened as I explained the purpose of the study, allowed them to select their own pseudonym, altered all other names relevant to the study, and allowed participant the opportunity to engage in member-checking throughout the study.

Interviews were downloaded to a password-protected laptop, saved as voice files to a USB flash drive, and labeled for transcription. I transcribed interviews verbatim. Transcripts were read several times and analyzed for emerging themes following Hycner's (1985) phenomenological multi-step data analysis process (see Table 2). Themes are reported and discussed in Chapter 4.

Table 2

Steps in Phenomenological Data Analysis – Moustakas and Hycner

MOUSTAKAS (1994)	HYCNER (1985)
Epoche	• Bracketing
Phenomenological Reduction	• Delineating Units of Meaning (Horizontalization) • Delineating Units of Meaning Relevant to the Research Question • Eliminating Redundancies
Imaginative Variation	• Clustering Units of Relevant Meaning to Develop Themes • Identifying General and Unique Themes for all Interviews • Returning to the Participant
Synthesis	• Contextualizing Themes

I took field notes to capture observations, ideas, and thoughts that emerged during each interview. In many ways, "field notes are a secondary data storage method in qualitative research" (Groenewald, 2004, p. 48). I went back to these notes as a point of comparison to the transcribed data. Additionally, reviewing field notes served as an initial data analysis step.

As stated earlier, I also engaged in journaling to practice reflexivity about the process. Specifically, I engaged in bridling (Dahlberg, 2006), a journaling practice that allows the researcher to merge the positive aspects of bracketing with being open with my participants about my assumptions and interpretations as a way to practice thoughtful reflexivity through during analysis. Journaling can offer another point of comparison as it contained my thoughts and questions as well as new ideas that emerged from the interviews. The journal also helped me to maintain awareness of my positionality and the ways in which my experiences and research shaped me.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological data analysis is a systematic process of reducing and interpreting individual descriptions to find the meaning of a shared experience and a "grasp of the very nature of the thing" (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). According to Moustakas (1994) and others, there are four basic yet critical steps for phenomenological data analysis:

1. Epoche/bracketing/bridling
2. Phenomenological reduction (*horizontalization*)

3. Clusters of Meaning
4. Synthesis

While the above steps are helpful, I found Hycner's (1985) guidelines more useful as a first-time researcher. In his work, *Some Guidelines for the Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data* (1985), Hycner offers a more in-depth version of Moustakas' (1994) four stages of phenomenological data analysis for new researchers and scholars. Interestingly, the intentional process of dwelling in and with the data, tracking and analyzing every unit of meaning along the way, is consistent with the use of intersectionality to analyze WOC's unique experiences at the intersections of race and gender (among other identities) in the field of advising.

Step One: Bracketing/Bridling

Though there are varying approaches (e.g., epoche/bracketing/bridling), the first phase of phenomenological data analysis allowed me to maintain awareness of topic-related biases and prejudgments. Where I deviate from Moustakas and Hycner is in the approach to epoche and bracketing. I do not believe that epoche or bracketing, as a reflection practice, can offer complete objectivity or suspension of my presuppositions. Thus, I utilized bridled my assumptions and reactions.

As an alternative to bracketing, bridling (Dahlberg, 2006) allows researchers to practice reflexivity through both bracketing and being open with the participant when exchanging ideas about the phenomenon. Following Merleau-Ponty and others, Dahlberg believes that objectivity is impossible. Influenced by her training in horseback riding, she

argues that while scholars cannot cut themselves off completely from their experiences and assumptions, they can practice intentionality through tightening and loosening the research "reins". Like bracketing, scholars remain aware of their pre-understandings and attempt to avoid letting them guide the project at hand. However, scholars using bridling also attempt to "understand the whole" – or, one's thoughts, feelings, and interpretations throughout the research – and remain openhearted and patient for the phenomenon to emerge within the relationship (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nystrom, 2008, p. 129-130). Electing to bridle over bracketing aligned with my critical race-gendered feminist epistemology. As I dwelled in the data, I had many questions in need of further exploration.

Bridling encourages openness to new questions, looking forward rather than backward, and sharing one's interpretations with participants. The intentionality in bridling aligned with culturally responsive practices of centering dialogue through conversation, relationship and collaboration, and mutual empowerment and healing (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Banks-Wallace, 2000; Phillips, 2006). Co-creating such a space allowed for exchanges of vulnerability and stories between the participants – experts on the phenomenon (Collins, 2000; Laverty, 2003) – and myself. As a result, I was gifted participants' unique perspectives that emerged in connection rather than expecting answers that made sense to me or sounded good to me. For example, Mother Hen's unique standpoint as a Black advisor who was a mother to college-aged children brought up a discussion how Black advisors who are mothers may provide their children

with wisdom about the college process – in the classroom and outside of the classroom – and attempt to bring their children to their universities as a way to watch over them.

In line with feminist(s), womanist(s), and indigenous epistemologies, I was not a distant researcher, but a co-facilitator in knowledge creation with my own critical raced-gendered standpoint (Collins, 2000, Dillard, 2000; Hartsock, 1983). Concerned with the everyday embodied experience of WOC, my deployment of phenomenology understood lived experience as shaped and informed by power relations and historical and cultural processes (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Ortega, 2016). Additionally, a critical race-gender epistemology adapts more positivistic understandings of phenomenology by paying attention to how multiple identities intersect to create complex commonalities and collective consciousness while also recognizing and appreciating heterogeneity among WOC (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Ortega, 2016; Phillips, 2006). Finally, a critical race-gender epistemology informs my use of phenomenology by advocating that the relationship between knowing-and/in-being (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000).

Step Two: Delineating Units of Meaning (Horizontalization)

The next step of phenomenological data analysis is reduction or *horizontalization* (Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). An iterative process, I re-read each transcript several times to gain a sense of the whole and followed Hycner's (1985) steps of horizontalization: (1) reduce the data into *general units of meaning* and (2) extrapolate *relevant units of meaning* to answer the research question. To gain a sense of the whole, I treated all of the data as holding equal weight. Units of meaning were coded line-by-line

and numbered for each transcript. I bridled my thoughts and feelings throughout the horizontalization process as questions, significant quotes, and ideas for theme names began to emerge. I created an organizational template for the general units of meaning. In this stage, the desire was not to analyze transcripts to answer the research question. Rather, I sought to obtain all of the data that captured each participant's overall experience.

Step Three: Delineating Units of Meaning Relevant to the Research Question

Once I collected all general units of meaning, I conducted the second step of horizontalization and lifted all relevant units of meaning that answered my research question (Hycner, 1985). Statements were relevant if they appeared to answer the question. I also placed statements that I was uncertain about into the category of relevant. Since analysis is an incomplete and subjective process, Hycner (1985) noted that some judgment calls must be made. Constant engagement with my bridled biases and presuppositions, dwelling in the data, and working with a peer coder to establish inter-coder reliability, helped make clear which statements were pertinent to the study.

The ongoing review of the data lasted from late September 2018 until late January 2019. I re-read transcripts, journaled and meditated, and discussed questions I had regarding interpretations about the data with participants. While it is easy to get lost in dwelling – rich stories lead to an overwhelming amount of data (and emotion), journaling, meditating, and returning to my research question kept me from being lost for too long.

A peer coder was also enlisted to offer perspective on the data. We strived for inter-coder reliability, or agreement on the codes and themes I developed for the data. A fellow doctoral candidate, my critical friend had experience in qualitative data analysis and training in feminist concepts such as intersectionality. I trained her to verify relevant units of meaning and completed verification of a random sample of three (out of nine) transcripts. We reached significant agreement, signifying that my presuppositions did not undermine the data analysis process (Hycner, 1985). There was little disagreement. Any moments of varied interpretation or disagreement that emerged, though little, were solved through clarifying statements and returning to the data.

Step Four: Eliminating Redundancies

With the above steps completed, I eliminated redundancies from the list (Hycner, 1985). Redundancies included not only literal content (i.e., same words), but the number of times a meaning showed up and how it showed up. I noted the number of times a specific meaning or word emerged in the data. Increased usage of the same word or phrases, when referencing similar experiences or holding similar meanings, helped indicate how important a topic or issue was to a participant (Hycner, 1985).

Step Five: Clustering Units of Relevant Meaning to Develop Themes

Next, I clustered related units of meaning to develop themes (Hycner, 1985). Following Hycner (1985), I weighed statements equally and clustered without assigning any value. I removed remaining redundancies and defined clusters as appropriate. This

stage is important, as themes emerged based on the clusters. Table 3 displays two of the clusters that formed the theme *Unique Relationships with Students of Color* for Jennifer.

Table 3

Clusters & Themes

Relevant Units of Meaning	Clusters	
• a lot of our students I'm able to relate to just because of who we serve • I notice that I'll have students that will remember my name, but not necessarily my White counterpart's name. • They'll come up and give me hugs, but not give my White counterparts hugs. • I notice that they seem to do that with the other African American females as well. • Sometimes that connection is rooted in the shared cultural/ethnic identity between us.	**SOC: Relating**	**Unique Relationships with SOC**
• I've witnessed students only reveal so much to my White counterparts, and feel more free, more relaxed [with me] • they will reveal more to me. • they can literally stand there and talk to them, and then leave them and come over to me, and the conversation is a little different. • I've had students tell me that, [with] some of my White counterparts, they felt judged in their office, or they felt looked down on, or they felt misunderstood. • some of my Students of Color may need a different kind of honesty than other students. • I had a male African-American student who had traveled from a different county without any identification. • I had a conversation with him about the importance of always carrying ID, especially as a young African-American male in America given the	**SOC: Real Talk**	

heightened interaction between law enforcement and African-American males. • I have also had conversations with my Students of Color about potential funding options available to them as first generation college students targeted towards students of color.		

Step Six: Identifying General and Unique Themes for all Interviews

Next, I made note of general and unique themes. General themes are themes that were common to all (or most) of the interviews, while unique themes were understood as significant to less than three individuals. The latter shows the diversity between participants who share a similar experience and identity as WOC academic advisors in Texas. To ensure that my presuppositions did not creep back into the study, I worked with my peer coder to verify the themes and discuss any discrepancies that emerged. There were no challenges in this step as my peer coder felt that theme included in the summary aligned with everything they believed to be a pervasive theme in their coding process.

Step Seven: Returning to the Participant

Next, I sent the themes to the participants to be verified. It was important that participants had as much contact as they wanted with their stories. Thus, member-checking happened during the transcription process and during this stage to ensure accuracy. In this step, I invited participants to confirm the accuracy of the themes, ensuring that the participants and researcher agreed on the data. Due to the overwhelmingly positive responses, themes did not need to be modified.

Seven out of nine participants agreed with the themes that I presented to them. Two participants did not respond. As participants engaged with the themes, they overwhelmingly remarked that the themes I presented resonated with them. Themes either sparked memories of events that participants did not discuss in the interviews or pieces of stories that they did share with me. As a result, this step led to more understanding around some participants' experiences and provided space for a discussion about our interpretations of the themes. For all who participated, a sense of feeling seen and heard emerged. As Lora stated:

> Reading the reoccurring themes is comforting, because other people have the same experiences I do. Comforting and… worrisome? That we're all having the same positive experiences (building relationships with students of color, having different conversations, finding support systems), but it's also worrisome because we seem to all be having the same negative experiences (low pay, bias and discrimination).

As Lora's quote demonstrates, knowing that one is not alone in their experiences is "comforting and…worrisome". A sense of real (and imaginary) community can be created around shared experiences. Shared experiences can be affirming as they let individuals know that they are not making things up or overreacting, particularly when considering negative experiences. Yet, worry sits on the other side of the coin as WOC witness themselves and each other still experiences the same biases and discrimination in the workplace.

Step Eight: Contextualizing Themes

Finally, I contextualized the themes by placing them back into the original context of the interviews from which they emerged. To do this, I created a composite summary for each participants' interview using the themes. This step allowed for a better understanding of the phenomenon of being and working as a WOC professional academic advisor.

Ethical Considerations

Credibility is the extent to which the research accurately represents and identities the participants (Merriam, 2009). I sought to promote credibility through three strategies: triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing with my dissertation chair, dissertation committee members, fellow Ph.D. students, and colleagues in higher education (Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that maintaining credibility is a significant factor in establishing trustworthiness. I sought to ensure trustworthiness by incorporating the following components into the study:

- Collecting data through in-depth, individual, semi-structured interviews that center marginalized perspectives, identify complex power dynamics, and pay attention to how multiple consciousness functions for WOC in higher education (Sulé, 2011).
- Providing thick, rich description of participants and contexts to illuminate the most salient themes to this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

- Ensuring transferability so that readers can make informed decisions regarding the transferability of findings to other settings (Merriam, 2009).
- Ensuring that dependability is encouraged through the use of consistent interview questions and, where appropriate, transparent descriptions of my research and analysis process in any report through the use of field notes, or "audit trails" that include detailed accounts of my methodological strategies, decisions, and shifts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).
- Utilizing triangulation by comparing demographic questionnaires with interviews to gain a fuller understanding of participants' identities and lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- Conducting member checks by allowing participants to review transcripts and clarify and/or add information that they believe will provide the most accurate answer to the questions posed. Participants who agreed to member check received digital copies of completed transcripts of their interviews to check my analysis and results for accuracy, clarify discrepancies, and make further remarks if necessary (Lincoln & Guba 1985).
- Documenting my thought process (i.e., links to prior experiences and reactions to participants) through reflexive journaling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- Utilizing a critical friend to check for consistency (Patton, 2002). The critical friend, my peer coder for the study, was a fellow practitioner who read the analyzed data to ensure that no misinterpretation occurred.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover and describe the lived experiences of WOC professional academic advisors at two-year and four-year public institutions of higher education. This chapter outlined the study's qualitative research design as well as presented the methodological framework of phenomenology that guided my analysis. Nine WOC advisors participated in this study. Utilizing intersectionality (theoretical framework) and phenomenology (methodological framework), I developed a more nuanced understanding of WOC advisors' lived experiences - always already categorized by race, gender, class (among other identities) in ways that create both unique challenges and opportunities in the advising workplace. Chapter 4 presents the themes that emerged from the interviews.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I report on findings of this study produced after implementing the research design and utilizing the methods described in Chapter 3. Nine self-identified WOC professional academic advisors were interviewed for this study. Of those nine participants, one woman identified as Asian/Bengali (*N*=1), one woman identified as Hispanic/Mexican (*N*=1), and seven women identified as African American/Black (*N*=7). All participants were located across the state of Texas and had at least one year of experience in their current position at their respective college or university. Six advisors have been in the field for over a decade. Of the nine advisors, two advisors worked at community colleges. The minimum for length of time in current position was set at one year. One year is enough time to become familiar with their position and the culture of their respective institution.

Participants self-selected their pseudonyms. Their names are: Sheila Walker, Lora, Chris, Jennifer, HappyHeart23, Mother Hen, Sheila Khan, Mary Davis, and Maria. I chose not to elaborate on each individual advisor any further to protect their identity. Due to the lack of WOC advisors in advising spaces, it is important to maintain confidentiality as best as possible to not jeopardize their jobs or safety.

As discussed in Chapter 3, themes emerged from meaning clusters. To create a cluster, I eliminated redundancies and only selected units of meaning that answered the

research questions: What are the lived experiences of WOC professional academic advisors? Once I had all relevant units of meaning, I cross-compared my findings with my peer-coders units of meaning. Then I worked to eliminate redundancy again.

Next, I looked for repeated words and ideas. I grouped all repeated words, phrases, and ideas together into clusters. However, care needed to be displayed as similar words or ideas may have held different meaning due to the context of the discussion (Hycner, 1985). Once all clusters were created, I looked for relationships between clusters and what themes emerged. Table 4 displays the following general themes.

Table 4

Dimensions and Corresponding Themes

Dimensions	Themes	Sub-Themes
WOC Knowing	Intersectional Awareness: WOC advisors' perspective as unique	• Knowing-in-Being • Lived experience as a too
Experience	Intersectional Bias and Discrimination	• "Angry Black Woman" Stereotype • Stonewalled
	Perceptions of Advisors: How I see myself vs How Others See Me	• Advisors as Un(der)valued • Advisors as Vital
Relationships	Complex Relationships with Colleagues: Difference Makes a Difference	• Complex Commonalities and Differences with White and Male Colleagues • Proving Oneself/Twice as Hard, Twice as Good • The Many Faces of Privilege

		• Microaggressions/Macroaggressions
	Unique Relationships with other Professionals of Color	• Strength in Numbers • Sista-Professionals • Between Us: Differences Between WOC
	Unique Relationships with Marginalized Students	• Different Conversations • "I Really Could Relate" • Being a Role Model
	Taking Care of Self	• Getting Support • Setting Boundaries: Leave Work at Work

Theme 1- Intersectional Awareness: WOC advisors' perspective as unique Experiential Knowing

At the intersection of race and gender, WOC's distinct standpoint provides them a unique lens from which to understand their experiences, their work, and their interactions with others, in society and on campus. Seven of the nine participants believed that their unique lens as WOC impacted their professional experiences. Many of their discussions linked larger social context - knowing and being in the world - to specifically how their worldviews impact their experiences and practices in advising.

> It's about 90% of how it impacts what I do based on my identity. (Maria)
>
> It impacts it because the world, I can only view it through my lens, which is an African American female lens. (Jennifer)
>
> I think knowing that I'm a Black woman in America, and though I do have opportunities, but there's still subtle racism that happens, and to not be oblivious or naive to it. I think that's what's made me uncomfortable at certain points, with my identity, but at the same time also it makes me excited because it's like, hey, Black women, we're blazing trails, we're doing what we got to do, and things that we were told we couldn't do, we're doing it, we're breaking the glass ceiling. And so there's this mix of in reality I'm a Black woman and this is what it means, but at the same time it's like hey, but I can use to my advantage and I can use that students a catalyst to propel me. (Chris)
>
> I just know that's something that is just in me. You can probably understand this, but I don't know what it is that parents do, Black parents do, but it's something that they put in us. As you're growing up, you just learn. So I move about the world and every aspect of my life as a Black woman, so I always factor that in, in whatever I do. That's probably the big difference with me and our Coordinator, as a White woman. She's just a woman. So she sees everything from a woman's perspective, not a White woman. But I see mine as a Black woman... (HappyHeart23)
>
> ...being a Black woman and just being in tune to what's going on socially, being aware of social injustice and things like that. (Mary Davis)

The majority of the participants believed that their ways of knowing shaped the ways in which approached and understood their work and their relationships. The majority of Black women in this study highlighted the relationship between identities, institutions (e.g., family), and larger structural forces as they spoke about how their lens was uniquely shaped and informed by "America" and "what's going on socially". In the participants' responses above, the feminist concept of the personal is political emerged as the women discussed their understandings of their experiential knowledge.

Lived Experience as a Tool

All participants used their unique perspectives and experiences to help their students, particularly traditionally marginalized students, navigate higher education. By using their lived experience as a tool to help students, WOC were able to create a sense of safety and welcome for students while also giving them the rules of the game to be successful.

> When they know that you are also African American, you have a different set of experiences that can also help them say, "Oh okay this is comfortable. This is okay to share. This is a safe space. (Sheila Walker)

> Truly, I feel like they're always marginalized. I feel like I'm always marginalized. I didn't want them or others to feel like they were marginalized. So I feel like my approach is always like, “you're welcomed. And you can do this. You can be successful. You're going to have to work hard, and you're going to have to try, but this will make a difference if you do it”. I think that's really what it is. I always felt marginalized and I don't want my students to feel marginalized. No matter what type of student they are. Color, race, traditional, non-traditional, it doesn't matter. (Sheila Khan)

They were also able to look for ways to create programming or decisions based on the perspective afforded by their unique standpoints.

> ...when it comes to meetings [and] we're talking about different things that we want to bring to the table, I tend to always make sure that the traditionally left out groups or marginalized groups. I'll look for ways for [traditionally left out groups or marginalized groups] to be recognized, realized, or accounted for in whatever those decisions, policies, potential programs are. I know that that is a direct reflection of who I am and the experiences I've had as a female and as an African American. (Jennifer)

> going into the third year of advising, I would, somehow, and I'm not quite sure how to do it, I would like to figure out a way to reach those students. I don't think that goodies should [only] be for people who are doing really, really well. Everybody needs to be able to experience these things. We need to make more program opportunities available for all of our students, not our students who have really good grades. (Lora)

Five of the nine participants shared that their past experiences as first generation Students of Color strongly impacted their identities as advisors and their ability to relate to their students. For example, Maria and Lora offered the following:

> I'm a first generation student myself so I was able to use my background and my knowledge and my struggles that I went through throughout college. Like I had to learn all these things myself...I've been there. So just giving everything that I've experienced, I tell my students, "Hey, I know exactly what you're going through. I know those feelings. I know the pressure from your parents, wanting you to graduate soon or what are you doing with your life or why are you changing majors ... I understand all that." I just use a little bit of my own experience along with some of the stories my other co-advisors have and I just kind of mold them together and walk them through what's best for them. (Maria)

> I don't know if this is because I'm a Person of Color of even because I'm a Woman of Color, but more so because I was a first generation college student, and to an effect, it's because I'm a Person of Color...I think having made so many mistakes as an undergraduate student, graduating is a whole mountain of loans, then just not really understanding how to navigate university life in general. I think I have a soft spot, not just for my Students of Color, not just Black students, but Hispanic students, and even some of my White students, as I see them making these same mistakes that I did. I see them racking up these loans and dropping classes. I'm like "Y'all, you're gonna have to pay this back, in full. You don't get to duck Sallie Mae forever. You gotta pay her back." (Lora)

WOC's lived experiences served as tools for connecting with and working on behalf of their students. For some, identity became a site through which to provide safety, while others were able to use the specialized, subjugated knowledge (Collins, 2000) afforded them to create policies and practices with marginalized students in mind. For the five participants who were first generation students, their unique experiences allowed them to support students from varying marginalized backgrounds. As Lora's quote

suggests, their unique experiences even caused the advisors to want to protect their students from making the same mistake they did.

Theme 2 - Intersectional Bias and Discrimination

"Angry Black Woman" Stereotype

While all of the participants combatted many instances of bias and discrimination, one prevalent discussion was the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype. In the US, anti-Black and anti-woman sentiments have worked together to depict Black women as having a constant chip on their shoulder or as being domineering (Collins, 2000). Five of the seven Black participants found themselves trying to contend with labels that commonly fall under the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype: difficult, troublemaker, overly sensitive, and aggressive. For several participants, the best self-monitoring tactic was holding back, readjusting responses or behavior, or silencing themselves altogether.

> ….maybe the truth is [that] African American women…we're seen as more aggressive. So we get the extra boot while they, the person, puts on that false front of being really nice and cheery...it becomes where we notice, as African-American women, there is a power dynamic, and we kind of pull back on some of the issues that might be going into office politics because we're afraid to speak up because we don't want to have the stigma of being the troublemaker. (Sheila Walker)

> If you call somebody out on their ignorance or whatever as a Black woman then there is that fear of being labeled difficult or you're upset, or you're sensitive. So there's been little things like that where I've had to just bite my tongue. Also too, because some things happen politically. (Mary Davis)

> There was just no support for me. I was sick and having a hard time. I still had to come to work and smile and be nice and be kind, because I think I don't want anyone to be like, "That's Lora, she's our resident angry Black lady." You know, right? That's one of my fears. ...I don't always feel like I can be my whole self there at work. I'm a really loud person, just kind of boisterous by nature. But

> when I go to work, I kind of feel like I have to mute myself and be quiet and you know, I tried not to have a bad attitude, even when things are really rough. Because I just don't want anybody to, like I said, I think I guess I have a ... I don't want people to think I'm an angry Black lady. (Lora)

For women who felt fortunate enough to work in spaces where the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype was not encountered, they still felt haunted by the ghost of past experiences. As a result, "the reality of those [haunting] thoughts" may have impacted their behavior and speech and allowed them to understand their sista-professionals' experiences.

> Me and friends talked about this before and I don't have those experiences in my office, but we talked about how Black women experience sometimes, I feel like if I speak up I'm gonna be seen as the Black woman with an attitude or being insubordinate or being out of order for voicing your opinions. So I feel like in some instances or just past experiences for me, I felt silenced because if I say something I'm gonna be seen as that Black woman with an attitude or Black woman who's insubordinate or Black woman who's sassy or whatever. So, you bring the reality of those thoughts in, [and] it impacts the way that you say something or don't say something. And I've been fortunate enough to not have that experience in my office, though I have experienced it before in different settings or previous positions or things like that. (Chris)

Black women in this study were very familiar with the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype, even if they no longer felt that they were in spaces where they would experience it. For the Black women, this stereotype forced them to engage in impression management and silence for fear of being seen as even more aggressive, angry, or opinionated. The "Angry Black Woman" stereotype became handcuffs, leaving Black women struggling to freely navigate speaking up for oneself and holding others accountable.

Stonewalled

Advisors' and students' multiple identities interact and intersect in the intimate one-to-one setting of the advising session. Cultural values, ideologies, social norms, and implicit (and explicit) biases emerge causing identities to potentially clash, conflict, or align. For WOC, it is often difficult to pinpoint which -ism they are facing in a moment of bias or discrimination in such a space. The participants' stories in this study were no different. Participants shared stories of sometimes hitting walls with their students (and students' families) due to their identities. In what I call being *stonewalled*, the participants faced everything from having their competency challenged to being completely shut out or shut down.

> The respect level is different depending on the family, and the student. The respect level, it's like they come in looking, "Oh, how long have you been doing this?". If they can see the degrees, then it's like, "Okay, maybe she's qualified. But, how long have you been doing it? They say you're educated, but are you?". Yeah, I am. And I can do this. Where others in my opinion, the respect is there when you walk in the door. I have to earn mine. With quite a few families. (Mother Hen)

> Sometimes when a student walks into my office, I can already sense that I'm Asian, and they may not think I can do my job. But, I can tell you very often, when that student is walking out of my office, they know I know how to do my job. So within that, when I sense that, okay this person has walls up, this person has walls up, I find ways to navigate that wall, because my job is to try to build that relationship with them. They need to know they can trust me. It's my job to build that trust. They need to know I can serve them and support them and answer their questions...So I have felt that but I'm usually able to navigate those situations to where they realize that I do know what I'm doing. [But] that was still difficult for me to do with those international pre-engineering students. I couldn't do it. It may be because I was a woman...It was the student's culture. Race and ethnicities which altered their perception of me. (Sheila Khan)

Chris shared the challenges that arise not only due to the perception of her status as a Black women from perceived American students, but how perceptions may change due to each student's own culture and background. She notes that there is never disrespect in such situations, but that students shut her out instead. Rather than exhibiting the distrust that Black students may have with White advisors, students - specifically, men - from non-U.S. cultures presume that Chris is incompetent at the intersection of her American Blackness and gender. She shared:

> The disadvantage is how I'm seen. Not really by my other advisors or in my office, how I'm seen by students. At the beginning, our transfer students come in and they may already have their preconceived notions of what a Black woman is, or what she looks like, or how she operates. And then when you add in the cultural aspect of someone coming from a different country...they're not really into western culture, they're really tied to their heritage and their particular culture. Not that it's a disadvantage...not that they were rude, or just blatantly disrespectful. That's just if they have a particular view of women first off, and then a Black woman on top of that. I'm just more aware of that important the advising office. I had one student come in, and didn't say much to me, and was very short with me, and really didn't have much to say. Then when I brought that to the attention of another advisor who met with them, who also identifies as African American they were like, "No, they were very talkative, they were very out there, they very thorough." I was like, "'That's so strange." They were like, "It's because you're a woman." And I was like, "It's probably because I'm a Black woman." And I wasn't joking...[it] plays a huge part in how that dynamic was going to go in the office.

Participants faced the walls often put up by parents and students holding stereotypes based on race/ethnicity and gender. Further, as Chris and Sheila pointed out, cultural perceptions about American WOC by international students who may be otherwise racially similar added another layer of tension in the advising space. Presumed incompetence is thus not only attributed to one's womanhood or race but also to one's

American-ness.

Theme 3 - Perceptions of Advisors: How I see myself vs How Others See Me

Advisors as Un(der)valued

Eight of the nine participants believed that a lack of knowledge about what academic advising is and what advisors do undermine academic advisors' value in the eyes of students, faculty, and administrators. As Chris notes:

> It's the perception of advising in general, students think it's "okay, I come in, get my schedule, that's it".

Operating under such faulty perceptions, students and administrators fail to value and adequately recognize the work that advisors do. HappyHeart23 believes that ignorance about who advisors are and what advisors do shapes perceptions and treatment of advisors. She suggested:

> As an advisor? We're not valued. I hate to say it like that. Most people on campus that have never advised, or are not in advising, they assume all we do is pick classes. That is not the nature of our job. For the most part, we don't even pick classes. I don't pick classes for students. I go in, and have a student, and explain to them what their degree is, what courses that they need to complete their degree, and what prerequisites. We work together to figure out what classes they want to take for that term, towards their degree. I don't ... that's maybe the hindrance: being an advisor and not being valued. I don't want to say it's like people are out to get advisors. It's that it's ignorance. I don't think they are aware of what we do. (HappyHeart23)

Lora builds upon HappyHeart23's statement, looking at the unique impact ignorance can have at institutional levels. She said:

> As a group, we are often ignored when we make recommendations (though this has gotten better now that we have a director who is a former academic advisor). Big decisions that affect our jobs and the way we advise happen over our heads and we're told about them later on as an afterthought. (Lora)

Though they may experience unique differences from their White and male colleagues, the majority of participants recognized that student and institutional perceptions of advisors held negative consequences for all advisors. Yet, they continued to see themselves as vital to both their students' and institutions' success.

Advisors as Vital

WOC advisors work in departments that are typically understood as the lowest of the institutional food-chain. Though the participants shared that they felt un(der)valued and misunderstood by others (i.e., students and administrators), they all believed that they play a vital role in students' success. Sheila Khan's words captures this general feeling perfectly as she states:

> …[we] help create class plans, that's kind of what they see us as. But, we're so much more than that...

For many of the participants, the advising space provided students the information and tools needed to begin and continue on the right path. As Mother Hen notes:

> [Advising's] the first ... it's the first insight the students get to education. And the importance of it. And the importance of building a foundation. You've got to start out right. And I think we help them put that best foot forward and go from there. I mean, it's a building and learning process. And I think that's really important. I think your advisor is probably one of the most important people. Then financial aid.

Maria echoes these remarks, noting that advisors need more recognition for the unique type of work that they do and the unique skills that they have.

> I think more recognition, not just in our institution, but in general. I don't think advisors are seen as an important role, but I think we're one of the most crucial when it comes to students and attaining the students because we are that face to

> face communication with the students. We are the ones that can actually build a relationship with them and we are their go-to people. If they don't know the answer to something, they email us for everything and we're the ones "Well, you need to contact this person. This is what you have to do." We are their go-to people and I don't think a lot of institutions see that, but we are. (Maria)

One participant shared that her institution supported academic advisors. This type of institutional support is indeed not normative for most advisors. In discussing the differences between her former college and her current role, Mary Davis remarks:

> ...the University in general is very, very supportive of academic advising and counseling. They really do support, they have lots of appreciation things. They really do support academic advisors and counselors...In general, advisors get blamed for everything. We have to know everything about everything and then when something doesn't go right or some piece of information doesn't get translated we get blamed for it…[but] they want to support us. Here, they are very, very supportive of their academic advisors and counselors. It's a much different culture.

Seeing themselves as much more than assistants in the course selection process, the participants shared the roles they played in students' academic lives, roles that allowed students - particularly, those who looked like them – to succeed. These roles included partnering with students for academic success, helping students navigate the (higher) education process, and build relationships with students that benefit both students and institutions. However, most of the participants were aware that how they saw themselves was not how their students or institutions saw them.

Theme 4: Complex Relationships with Colleagues: Difference Makes a Difference

Complex Commonalities and Differences with White and Male Colleagues

The majority of the participants discussed similarities and differences they shared with their White and male colleagues. Reflecting on these similarities, participants

provided examples of how their race and/or gender complexly impacted their experiences differently than their colleagues with otherwise privileged statuses. For WOC, experiences of bias included encountering racism and sexism, being unvalued or undervalued by students, faculty, and their institutions, and being overworked and underpaid.

> The female part, yeah. As in the respect we get from the male students and male parents. You're female. So, we *almost* get that same amount of respect, if they're that type. (Mother Hen)

> ...our Coordinator, she's so much older than me, so her experience is different, just because when she started, advising wasn't valued. The beauty of having her there is, she's seen the profession of academic advising evolve...So I'm sure she's been dealing with a lot of that. She's seen all parts of it. Versus me, my experience has still been White male, but it probably wasn't ... I hate to say this, but I don't think it was as tough as probably what she experienced and what she had to deal with, just because the world has changed over the years. However, she doesn't get that Black ... The Black factor doesn't come into play with her because she's a White woman. So I would say, if I had to compare my Coordinator versus our Dean, I have a lot more similarities with her, just being a woman, but the Black factor is the main difference. (HappyHeart23)

For some participants, complex commonalities brought a level of comfort:

> I feel like it is different and similar at the same time...from a cultural perspective, we both identify as African American...The differences are gonna be the gender but the similarities are our cultural background. And even in that you have subcultures. So you have two individuals that can both be African American or identify as Black, and have different subcultures based off where they grew up, based off experiences, based off their upbringing. And of course because we're in a professional setting, you don't go into all that. But the fact that we both identify in that way, to me it makes it more comfortable within the office space. (Chris)

However, some participants believed that pivotal moments in the workplace or in society could disrupt solidarity built around complex commonalities. For Sheila Walker, it was politics at the national level. She shared:

> ...unless it's a situation that becomes more political, or um conservative versus liberal, or even religious...it's pretty much the same. It's "Okay. Yeah. We're all on this page. No worries". We're trying to get to the same goal. [But] I remember when Trump was elected...I seen something on YouTube...they had a bunch of the Ku Klux Klan on a bridge openly celebrating the election and I was just absolutely distraught. I was crying. I was just like really upset and my supervisor who was a White woman came in. And, I said, "I can't, understand this." She said, "well, it's only four years". I looked at her and I know the look on my face was pure rage and disbelief. It was like "How can you really say that to me right now?" At that point I knew that, "Okay, I can't be the same person for her". You know? She's not going to understand my circumstances at all. And, so it was that where I think the schism of that dynamic really came even more so in my [opinion]. A lot of people in the office weren't seeing the same thing that I was. They weren't understanding the fear that I felt or any of us in the office [felt] as African American women. We never even talked about it in our office. We didn't talk about how we might be feeling or how that might impact our relationship with our students. It was just politics as normal, you know, the day went on. (Sheila Walker)

Only one participant shared that she did not see any commonalities (or differences) with her White or male colleagues as it related to her experiences. Instead, she felt that her performance and expertise affected her experiences more than her race and gender. She reported:

> If you prove yourself, then it doesn't matter what color you are. If you can get the job done it doesn't matter who you really are as long as you can get the job done. I have my White colleagues and male colleagues and WOC, it doesn't matter who they are, they come to me often times when my assistant dean isn't there. So I don't feel like my experiences are different or similar or anything to them. As long as I'm the expert in what I do...I feel like my experiences would be different many if I couldn't do what I'm supposed to do. Like, "Hey are you supposed to be here? Could you leave? Why did you choose advising"? Maybe I would have gotten a lot more questions. (Sheila Khan)

Though the participants believed that shared commonalities with their White and male colleagues, the women also believed that their perceived otherness created complex relationships and experiences between themselves and others. Where sharing racial and

gender identities created moments of connection and solidarity, critical moments such as elections created distance and tension. For some, like Sheila Khan, cultural messaging around meritocracy seemingly prevented feelings of commonality and difference between herself and her colleagues.

Proving Oneself/Twice as Hard, Twice as Good

Five of the participants recounted experiences where they had to prove themselves in order to gain respect or had to work harder than their White and male counterparts. For Sheila, an internalized link between earning respect and proving herself led to often working twice as hard and being twice as good in her area. She said:

> As a colored person, as an Asian person, I always feel like I have to prove myself. I always feel like I have to prove myself. I feel like I cannot earn my respect from anyone until I can prove myself. If I don't get an opportunity to prove myself, then I feel like I cannot earn my respect. (Sheila Khan)

Lora shared that being socialized as a Black girl meant learning that she had to work twice as hard and be twice as good as her counterparts. Thus, witnessing the way in which White colleagues opt out of work "never occurred to her" as an option because she learned that her livelihood depended on her to prove herself daily. She shared:

> We had an [White male] advisor who, at some point, just decided he wasn't gonna do anything. It never occurred to me. I was raised, every time I looked around, my parents were having a conversation with me where it was like, "You have to work harder and be better for anybody to give you anything". That's how I approach everything. That's how I approach work. I come in and I grind. To say to somebody, "Oh, I'm just not gonna do that today," is just like, "What?" I need my paycheck...(Lora)

One participant suggested what could potentially go wrong if you do too much or are too good. Sheila noted:

> I see a lot of [White] women who are in that role of having a lot of energy and a lot of expectations, and having it all together. If you're Black, and you have that dynamic and that strength, they're seeing you as a threat. It can become a negative situation. I don't know if that's true, it's me seeing that from that angle as an African-American woman. If you put on a good show, and you're White, you're going to be promoted faster than if you don't put on a show and you're Black. If you put on a show [as a Black woman], then you're seen as a threat, or somebody who is going to be a little bit too aggressive. (Sheila Walker)

ALANA women have been socialized to understand that the intersections of marginalized racial and gender identities comes with many consequences, including the need to work twice as hard and be twice as smart as their White and male colleagues. Internalizing these messages often meant that the participants worked hard because they did not feel that they could falter or take a break. However, as Sheila Walker suggested, Black women's efforts to prove themselves could be stereotyped as being too aggressive and could become the reason for negative feedback and other penalties.

The Many Faces of Privilege

WOC witnessed White and male colleagues enjoy privileges that they felt were not afforded to their unique positioning at the intersections of social and professional identities. For the participants, the privilege - or, unearned advantage (Tatum, 2017) - of Whiteness and maleness meant having the freedom to take off work to take care of frivolous issues, be chosen for promotions and work opportunities, and unearned and unquestioned respect and authority.

> I did see the two White people who worked there at some point were just like, "Nope. Fuck this. Sorry. Let's not do this". I don't know if that's a White thing…[but] my White colleagues (both men and women) and I differ in the liberties we take. Three of my White colleagues (two women, one man) leave work early to attend regularly scheduled hair and/or pedicure appointments each

> month. I don’t and would never schedule a hair appointment or a mani/pedi when I’m supposed to be working, even if I do have the vacation time to do it. (Lora)
>
> ...my White colleagues have been able to expand a lot more than we have as far as going to different trips, being in charge of different programs, just like visiting elementary schools and things like that and talking about careers, doing different advisements at different institutions, different high schools that we do attract students to. So they've always been first choice. ...she has the advantage because of her color of skin, you know?...It's sad to say but it is what it is and the society we have to deal with that seal and it's very obvious sometimes. (Maria)
>
> ...the different thing[s] that we run into on campus. Like I was talking about with the Associate Dean, you can talk to them about it because they understand it, when you see different behaviors on campus. Our similarities, we definitely as Black individuals at the university, we pick up on things that probably most people don't see. We are like, "Oh, okay. That's how that person is." However, the person that he reported to was a White man. He has already been promoted to another position. A high position...that is probably the biggest difference. He probably has much more mobility, or quicker mobility than I ever will, as a man. Maybe that privilege as a man, even though he's Black, because they definitely have issues there, too. He has to run into the same things because he's a Black man. I hate to use the word easier, but it's just not as...There's not as many hiccups in his process. (HappyHeart23)
>
> They get respect right off the bat. Even if they are bumbling. I've sat in on a few and it's like not a problem. Let me falter like that, and oh my gosh, “where's your boss? Who else can I see”? That's not the same with a male. A male can have an off day. Everybody is just fine with it. As a female, you can't have an off day. Especially as a Black female. You cannot have an off day...When you're male, everything's good. It doesn't even matter if you're a Black male or a White male. It's good. (Mother Hen)

While many of the participants spoke to not having access to the same privileges afforded to their colleagues, Lora took advantage of one “privilege” she felt she had access to: joking about race. In joking about race, she was able to both subvert office policies and enact resistance while also using humor to cultivate her own joy. She shared:

> I get to say things that I don't feel like White people can say, which may or may or may not be an advantage. The other day, I had made coffee. I like my coffee

> really strong. The dean had a cup. She was like, "Oh my gosh, I love this coffee. Whoever made the coffee before this, they can't do this anymore." And I went, "Oh, it's because I'm Black." She just looked at me. And I was like, "Oh, okay." I mean, I don't think that White people can go, "Well, it's because I'm White." I feel like I get away with stuff sometimes, because people are like, "Oh, we can't say anything to her, because she might go to HR on us." She might not be able to ... so I do. Little stuff like that. I mean, like you got to take your joy where you can find it, man. That is, that's an advantage...being able to say inappropriate things and nobody can say anything to you. Just once a day, if I could just say something and make our secretary blush and say, "Oh my word!" I just giggle all the way back to my office.

WOC advisors perceived that their White and male colleagues benefited from racial and gender privilege in the workplace. Privilege affords White and male advisors respect, the option to opt out at work, and the room to make mistakes. Even across shared marginalized identities, WOC advisors perceived that their White women and Men of Color colleagues still experienced the privilege of quick access to promotion.

Microaggressions/Macroaggressions

Though the participants all felt that they had relatively positive relationships with their coworkers, they also shared the microaggressions and macroaggressions that they experienced and witnessed in their professional relationships with their colleagues. Lora identified one macroaggression surrounding a common hot topic for Black women: hair. Lora shared about her experience with White colleagues' physical act of racism in which they invaded her space and body. Here Lora discusses an event that many Black women know too well: White people's sense of entitlement to Black bodies often leaves Black women, in particular, vulnerable to unwanted comments and touch. She recounts:

> I came in to work with different hair. You would have thought I had plastic surgery and I turned into a whole new person over Christmas the reactions were

> so loud and crazy. My older White women coworkers made loud comments about my “new hair.” They asked me all kinds of questions (is it my real hair, how long did it take, is my hair heavy, did it hurt, why the sudden change). Some of them even touched my hair without my permission. I have never seen/heard anything like this happen with my White colleagues. (Lora)

For Mary and Sheila Khan, self-proclaimed “woke” coworkers were less physically intrusive. However, from channeling one’s inner Black woman to implying that WOC are affirmative action hires, White colleagues performed microaggressions that left the participants’ surprised, peeved, and having to manage their emotions.

> I guess maybe that it's the stuff that most Black women deal with is people who are seemingly woke or seemingly ... They're tolerant or whatever, making comments and trying to gauge, "Do I address this?" It doesn't happen often, but it's tough….he'll make little comments like he does a stereotypical Black voice like, "Girl, you know." That thing...And so do I say something like, “That's ignorant”? (Mary Davis)

> ...he's much, much older than us. He's also very close to me. He asked me one time, "Do you ever feel like you got this job because you're Asian?" Cause we talk about race a lot . We talk about race and how people are marginalized, religion wise, culture wise, and color wise. We talk a lot about that. Disability wise. We talk a lot about that. He asked me that and I said, " what? I don't. I don't think I got hired because I'm Asian. I got hired because I'm qualified to do what I do." So that was really surprising that he might think that I might think that I got hired just because of my color and my expertise has no bearing on what I do...that was a negative experience for me more as an intimidation tactic. (Sheila Khan)

HappyHeart23 and Maria discussed how witnessing or hearing about colleagues’ discriminatory behavior, directed at or done in front of others, led to distrusting White women colleagues:

> ...I don't trust her because she's shown not to be trusted. That's exactly why I don't trust her. That's not just impacting me, but we have a new Associate Dean, who's a Black woman. And we have a new President, and it's a Black woman...and just how she has responded to it has spoken tons about who she is. So I see how she has said little snide remarks about the president, as well as our associate dean.

> And I get along well with our associate dean 'cause I just can relate. And just different things that she says. It's not directive. I don't know. I mean, you know how they can say something that's not direct, but you be like, “mhmm [crosstalk]”. So, that's why I don't trust her. And that's why I kind of feel the way I feel about her. And it's taught me to say, okay, this is probably gonna be the nature of the beast...you have to learn how to navigate those waters. (HappyHeart23)

> ...my situation with my previous lead. She was Caucasian, so that might have been some of the issues. I do know that she never personally told me about her racism, but one of my other colleagues, she was Caucasian, but she made some comments in front of her and she told me about it. So, not personal face to face, but I'm sure behind my back. (Maria)

Participants spoke at length about the microaggressions and macroaggressions they faced in the advising space – specifically, with their colleagues. As a result, the participants shared their frustration with the aggressions they faced and their trepidation about correcting their colleagues. Most of the women discussed how the aggressions of White women, in particular, broke down WOC’s trust in and solidarity with White women.

Theme 5 - Unique Relationships with other Professionals of Color

Strength in Numbers

Having been “the only brown person in the office” (Lora) at some point in their career, the participants know what it means to feel alone, isolated, or like a “zebra” (Mother Hen). Eight of the nine participants believed that having Colleagues of Color on campus offered them extra support, unspoken understanding, and a sense of comfort. Jennifer shared:

> There is an understanding of the duality of an African American that goes unspoken that I can pick up on in those transitions and those cues that my White

> counterparts aren't able to pick up on or don't understand. There's a level of comfortability that seems to be established a lot quicker with other African Americans, be it instructors, be it trainers.
> this unspoken, "Oh, we're in this together," comradery that is developed. When we talk about professionalism, there are certain conversations that I can have with them that would never take place in mixed company. When I say mixed company, I mean outside of African Americans. There's a focus when we get together on "how do we get African American students to take advantage of this?". It's something that isn't facilitated by me. Those conversations definitely arise more in that setting than they do when I interact with Caucasians in any of those settings. A lot of the times, African Americans are more willing to work with me if I'm presenting a program...I definitely get a lot more support, or they're more eager to cooperate.

Those lucky enough to have at least one other Advisor of Color in the advising office found support daily. Having Colleagues of Color within the office not only gave Chris permission to be herself, but helped Maria feel supported in the face of exclusion.

> ...with the African American that I have worked with, whether they're male or female, to see how comfortable they are in their roles. And even if they're not comfortable in certain areas, just to see how they're just themselves, I think has made me more comfortable. Even now, just in our particular roles and having conversations with different staff members or people in my department, it's like wow, they give me the permission for me to be myself, I haven't given myself the permission to be myself. Now that I'm giving myself that permission, I'm like "Hey, I can talk the way I talk and joke the way I joke", and still be professional, and not feel like I have to have this demeanor or this image to be deemed as professional. I think that's really helped. (Chris)

> Having another minority advisor has really helped me and it helps her too. We talk to each other and we've always told each other, "I got you. You got me." Whenever one of us is missing, we're like, "I needed you yesterday. This happened." We always vented to each other and that has really helped us keep the balance of having someone you can identify with, with the good and the bad. (Maria)

> The other participants shared that they had to find support from Colleagues of Color across campus.

> I participate in the Black professional network as a way to have a safe space to be with other [Black] college professionals that come from across the entire campus, there's administrators, there's faculty in this particular organization, more administrators than staff and faculty...there seems to be a support system out there. If I ever had a major issue, or felt like I was maybe struggling or being discriminated against, there would be a network there for me to communicate with. I don't necessarily feel that in my own department or [with] my colleagues. (Mary Davis)

> It makes me feel like I have some support in another part of the campus, and somebody that can advocate for me as far as potentially moving up or if I'm looking for another job
> I have somebody else out there that's supporting me. Specifically in the Success Center because that's where my colleague, the African American male, is. (HappyHeart23)

However, gender differences may affect the solidarity between WOC advisors and MOC advisors. As Jennifer expresses, Men of Color may perpetuate instances of misogyny or sexism of perceive WOC as a threat and leave them to fend for themselves. She states:

> I've witnessed a couple of things. I've witnessed that the assumption that the Woman of Color is always going to have your back in the workforce, and so you take advantage of that. You do things to "get over on her" that you wouldn't on someone else. Or it's the polar opposite, and you feel like she's a threat to you. So, the way that you would help or be supportive of someone else, you're not of her.

Eight of the nine participants happily spoke about the support they received from their other Professionals of Color at their institutions. In places where the participants found themselves constantly fighting against biases, aggressions, and stereotypes, they knew that they had support across campus and sometimes in the advising space. The relationships between Professionals of Color gave the women space to vent, strategize,

and to be themselves. Only one participant pointed out the ways gender differences can negatively impact solidarity.

Sista-Professionals

Black women spoke at length about their relationships with other Black women colleagues. As "sista-professionals", Black women find support and a safe space in their professional relationships with other Black women. In these spaces, Black women can be their full, authentic selves without fear of negative consequence. Further, a sista-professional is there to back the participants and serves as one's eyes, ears, and thermometer. Sheila Walker shared that her sista-professionals were important to her particularly after the 2016 election of Trump. For her, sista-professionals were the only people she could lean on. She said:

> We all had to talk about it because we all had it de-stress over it. You know? We couldn't go on with the day as normal and It stopped us from... you know, it was the only way we could we could feel like we were normal. You know? The whole world seemed crazy, and we didn't want to be crazy in it. And, we had a job: We still had to see our students that day. (Sheila Walker)

For Mary and Chris, simply having sista-professionals to relate to and connect with brought a different level of comfort and positively impacted their experiences in the workplace.

> They do have a group on campus called the Black professional network and so being able to be a part of that and get with other [Black professionals]...And there are a lot of women in that particular group, and being able to connect with other women on campus who identify as African American or Person of Color from the African diaspora. To be able to relate with them and connect with them. (Mary Davis)

> I feel like I have that same level of comfort of, “Hey, she can be herself, I can by myself,” and not feeling like we have to talk a certain way. Just naturally, not all but some Black women, our voices are just more coarse, our voices are a little bit more deeper, our voices are a little bit more strong. So with that, then we laugh, for me if I laugh, you're gonna hear me, I'm not obnoxious and I'm not rambunctious with my laughs, but my laughs are hearty, they're out there. Not like te-he-he. With that, having that dynamic of another Black woman and a Black male in the office. But with this question of a Black woman in the office, it just makes me feel comfortable in myself. (Chris)

Mother Hen and HappyHeart23 shared that sista-professionals were important sounding boards. These friendships allowed them to share their authentic feelings, worries, and thoughts, and offered real feedback and support.

> ...I feel like she can relate. And we talk it out. Talk it through. She can see a side that maybe I didn't see, or I thought I saw, and she's like, “yeah it's not even like that. This is what it was” So, if I didn't have her, I probably maybe would feel sometimes like you know, like a zebra. Talking it through with her, and bouncing things off of her, it's great. I'm glad to have her. I don't know. It makes everything so much better. It's a smooth ride. Because whenever I feel offended, if there's anything that I feel like maybe was offensive...I go to her. (Mother Hen)

> Now, the Associate Dean is a Black woman...So having her...I don't even know if she realizes how supportive she is, but just her presence there and reassurance of, “Okay, I'm not crazy”. Because we'll talk about different things. I don't want to say it's not intentional, but they're not gonna be overt with things that I feel may be racist, or insensitive. But just to have her there and tell her this, and [know] “okay, I'm not crazy. That was inappropriate”. Especially, I'm seeing that a lot more with our President as a Black woman. These people have been here for so many years, they're just not here for it. (HappyHeart23)

Black women’s friendships continue to provide safety and support to each other. Being able to relate and not have to explain oneself allowed the participants to make time with their sista-professional to tackle real issues, gain perspective, and be re-affirmed when necessary.

Between Us: Differences between WOC

While WOC can (and do) find solace, strength, and support from their Woman of Color colleagues, they also discussed the differences they often had to navigate. Intersectionality allows for nuance and difference to emerge in the experiences of women who share racialized and gendered identities. As Chris notes:

> So there's a woman that identifies as Hispanic, then a woman who identifies as Asian American, so probably not WOC but just the diversity of minority backgrounds....some things are similar just with experience of being a minority. Not only just at institutions, but in America, honestly. We're able to relate in those instances. Then some of it is upbringing. There's just some ways that minorities might, like growing up in a minority home is just different from growing up in a White home. So just that example just showing there's some similarities that we have because of our experiences as a minority, but at the same time, there might be some differences because we identify differently. So an experience in America for a Latino/Latina might be different from an experience of a Black person, African American person.

Sometimes differences between WOC were beneficial in providing perspective and led to a fuller understanding of situations. For Black women, differences such as age (Mother Hen) and institutional/advising experience (Jennifer) provided different but useful perspectives. For Mother Hen, her younger Black woman coworker's perspective helped her decipher potentially offensive situations. For Jennifer institutional differences (i.e., 2-year vs. 4-year settings), provided different understandings and expectations of issues like funding, student populations, program implementation, and more. She noted that there was "just the overall expectation level is different" (Jennifer).

However, sometimes differences between WOC led to clashing or conflict, distrust, or different approaches to institutional problem-solving. This was particularly true between U.S. Black women and non-Black and/or non-U.S. WOC.

> The differences are that I navigate waters as far as I'm a Black woman. I just see everything from that perspective. I don't know, I can't speak on their behalf. I don't think that they navigate ...The two other women in my office that I advise with, one is Asian and the other woman is Hispanic. I don't think they see themselves from that perspective. Maybe they just see themselves as women. This is what I can't say for sure because I've never felt comfortable enough to have the conversations with them; conversations that I don't mind having with my Associate Dean because I know she's a Black woman. It's difficult for me to answer that question because I really don't know. I don't even feel comfortable enough to discuss how I feel about our Coordinator. I don't think they would understand or relate to my experience. I've seen [the Coordinator] do things like that with my Vietnamese colleague as well, saying stuff. That's the only reason I feel like I can't answer that question honestly because I don't know their perspective. (HappyHeart23)

> ...she is older, because she is from India, occasionally, we'll have these ... I don't want to say clashes, where I'm a more reserved person. But she's really pushy. She'll tell you. She says, "Oh, I'm Indian. I just go for it. "I'm like, "Could you go for it over there? I can't do this." We do occasionally butt heads. Because I, again, I don't know if it's cultural. But she herself attributes it to the fact that she's Indian and she just gets things done. I'm like, "That's great." But I am more, "Let's lay back and see. Let's get the lay of the land before we start demanding things." Like, "What's going on here?" (Lora)

> ...she's got an interesting dynamic. She is a Woman of Color, but her family is all from Africa. So she was raised in the States. But, I want to say there's a different set of circumstances for people who come from different nations that didn't grow up in the United States. She's going to [have a] different aspect of how she views things. I have some anxiety. I'm not going to lie, you know? I've got anxious thoughts that run around the make me feel like "Am I doing this right?" and "am I going to look be looked at this way or that way?". "Should I put on this face or that face?". I don't see my coworker having that same kind of anxiety. I don't know if it's because her parents have instilled that pride and says "You are not less than this. You are the head and not the tail" and very strong in that. Whereas, my family says "Be careful of everything you do because you know when something may happen to you". So that's a different dynamic that I grew up with.

> I think she has it all together. If nothing else, she knows the power dynamic more than anything else because her father also works on campus and um she can talk to him about things. (Sheila Walker)

The participants' responses remind us that their experiences are not a monolith. Though they shared many complex commonalities with each other, the participants described ways that intra-group differences impacted their relationships with other WOC. For some, differences brought new discussions, new knowledge, and new strategies for problem-solving. For others, cultural clashing occurred and often resulted in annoyance or distrust.

Theme 6 - Unique Relationships with Marginalized Students

Different Conversations

Eight of the nine advisors mentioned having different conversations with Students of Color. Specifically, six of the seven Black women advisors believed that their shared cultural connections allowed them to take the risk of engaging in conversations about politically-relevant issues, discrimination and bias, and cultural truths that could help students navigate the college experience better.

> Feel like I have closer relationships with the Students of Color that I meet with. Have noticed that when Students of Color make appointments with me, especially WOC, they tend to keep making appointments with me...I think that I can understand them a little bit better. Think that we get to have conversations that maybe they wouldn't have with other advisors. If I was not who I was, we would probably communicate on a very different level. (Lora)

> Students of Color would maybe say something to me, or Kelly or Alex, that they wouldn't say to some of the other White colleagues. They may be comfortable to talk about if they'd been discriminated against. (Mary Davis)

> ...those that I can touch, I feel comfortable with sharing an experience or two with them that I can't share with others...Some may be offended. You know what I'm saying? It's a whole different conversation. And it's a different way I can present it to my *child*. (Mother Hen)

> I am honest with all of my students. [But], some of my Students of Color may need a different kind of honesty than other students. For example, I had a male African-American student who had traveled from a different county without any identification. I had a conversation with him about the importance of always carrying ID, especially as a young African-American male in America given the heightened interaction between law enforcement and African-American males. His mother was present and agreed with the conversation. I have also had conversations with my Students of Color about potential funding options available to them as first generation college students targeted towards Students of Color. (Jennifer)

> I feel almost like family. I would treat them...Not that I wouldn't treat every student like that. [But] I really, truly do feel like family because I understand their situation and their plight. A lot of times, I'll get a lot more personal information from my Students of Color, my Black students, let me be specific, about what they're dealing with personally. That helps me advise them better. I can be a lot more sensitive to it. (HappyHeart23)

While all of the advisors spoke to their passion for working with students, most of the participants discussed being able to have different conversations with their Students of Color. In these spaces of safety, the Black women were able to not only have discussions about navigating higher education as a Black person (or Black woman), but they were able to provide wisdom for how to navigate racism in society at large. Many of the Black women in this study spoke to a kinship connection that was created due to the understanding brought by shared cultural backgrounds.

"I Really Could Relate"

Over half of the participants shared that they felt they could relate to their students more because of shared identities. Mother Hen's quote as the title of the theme captures

how most of the advisors saw their experiences with their Students of Color. Similar cultural and educational (i.e., first generation status) backgrounds meant being able to connect, provide wisdom from one's lived experience, and have more in-depth academic and non-academic conversations. For the participants, being able to relate to students positively impacted the quality and results of their advising work with their students. As Chris notes, "students can come and they can see someone that looks like them. I've had students say, "I just like coming to you because we get each other." We are interrelated culturally. And so that it's definitely an advantage, it's something that I wish honestly I would have had".

> The advantages I would say again being able to connect with not just the Hispanic population but the first generation students, the students that are struggling financially or have family problems, I mean there's a lot of different situations that I can be like, "I totally understand." Whether it's pressure from the parents, pressure from oneself because they're not where they wanted to be in life at that certain point or disappointment because they didn't get into a program or something. So the advantages to me is I can relate. I'm relatable to the students and by me opening up on how much I am relatable to them, it helps them bring their wall down and actually let us have a trust bond between us (Maria)

> I get to have really unique relationships with other Students of Color. We get to have more real conversations. We come from a similar background. There are just things that you up with as a Black person. You have these shared experiences that are just similar, for people of color. (Lora)

> I've noticed a few people there so a lot of the students don't know me, so I notice that Black students come in and they don't know who I am or haven't met me they're like, "Hi, who are you?"...being somebody who is a Person of Color, just being able to relate on that. That's definitely an advantage. Being able to relate to other Students of Color and other women. Other female or people who identify as women. (Mary Davis)

> ...in relating to our students, a lot of our students I'm able to relate to just because of who we serve, the population of students that we serve are definitely what's considered low income, typically referred to as minority students, and so there's a lot of common ground. Even when talking to students, I've witnessed students only reveal so much to my White counterparts, and feel more free, more relaxed, whatever it is, but they will reveal more to me. It can be literally in the same day. Like they can literally stand there and talk to them, and then leave them and come over to me, and the conversation is a little different. (Jennifer)

However, Maria pointed out that while relating to students is an exciting benefit, it can sometimes require advisors to create stronger boundaries:

> Sometimes my relationships and being able to identify with [students], they expect a little bit more extra that I can't provide because of professionalism. At that point, I tell them there's a line that we have to draw...It has to be by the rules. Unfortunately this is how it is...Sometimes when you build such a good relationship with the students, they sometimes expect a little bit more there's some things that we can't unfortunately provide or do for them as far as the academic status because they see you as a friend instead of the professional advisor student relationship. Other than those few things, I love it. I really do. It makes me proud, happy with any minority, Blacks, Africans, 'cause we do have a lot of international students. I get excited. They remember you. (Maria)

Almost all of the participants felt that they were able to relate to their students (and their experiences) due to their shared backgrounds. They also perceived that relatability created opportunities for having different conversations, tearing down walls of mistrust, and being a role model. However, as Maria stated, WOC advisors may have to develop stronger professional boundaries with their marginalized students so as to not overstep the lines of professionalism.

Being a Role Model

Seven of the nine participants believed that they were role models for their Students of Color. For them, the ability to be a Person of Color in a professional role

helped them represent a vision of professionalism and success that students could seek to achieve. Through modeling professional behavior and providing motivation, advisors showed their commitment to helping students reach for success in the professional world.

> I really hope to, in my role, especially as an African American woman, I really hope for students, particularly first gen and minority, to see me and to see education of "Hey I can do that too". (Chris)

> I definitely want to represent a professional Black woman who is navigating in space[s] just like they are. Even though there are some minority-majority universities, most of the representatives on campus are White and male. (Mary Davis)

> I try to lead by example. I am careful of my language and what I say in front of students. I try to always present myself as a professional to the student because I want them to carry themselves in the same manner. (Jennifer)

> I always model positive behavior, respectful behavior, regardless of who my student is.
> I speak motivationally because I truly do believe in my students. I'm the staff advisor for a [Asian] student org. If they need a staff advisor, I'm glad to be their staff advisor for whatever they need. I can support them for the year that they need me to support them. (Sheila Khan)

> ...share with them "look, I can do it, you can do it. Don't just stop with a bachelors. Let's go as far as you can go". (Mother Hen)

> What I do right now is already being a good role model because I put my student first. (Maria)

Other participants were able to serve as a role model for students who may have resided on the margins of the margins. Describing herself and the students of color she advised as "odd ducks," Sheila Walker suggested that they did not fully fit in with White or Black communities at the institution. Thus, for her, being visible in her difference helped students to embrace themselves and their unique differences. She shared:

> I'm an odd duck. I can help my students who are also odd ducks...Being African-American and enjoying those things gives them even more opportunity to be themselves. In a positive sense, I look at their diversity as something to be celebrated...
> those students who feel kinda like they're not in a role where they can feel safe, I am a good role model for them. I may not be the best role model for the HB[C]U's, [or] the typical African American fraternal or sorority organization. I'm not the one who's gonna tell them "Okay, this how you make it in the White man's world." I'm the one who says “this is how you can be who you are in that world...not becoming somebody but being somebody”.

However, two participants believed that they were not role models. For both participants, a role model was “somebody you want to become” (HappyHeart23).

> I don't know if I see myself as a role model. The only reason I say this is that, when you're a student, and you're going in, and you're trying to figure out what you want to major in, what you want to become, academic advisor is not on most people’s list...But, I do see myself as a professional that students feel like they can go to and kind of say, "Okay, well, there is this Black woman advisor in business, and we can go to her. Maybe if she's open to helping." I don't know….a role model's gonna be somebody that you want to become. People aren't just clamoring to become an academic advisor. It's just not that type of profession. Academic advising, it's a blessing. Don't get me wrong. It's just different. (HappyHeart23)

> The students who I work with want to be nurses. I'm very clear, that's not who I am, that's not what I do. [So,] I don't view myself as a role model. (Lora)

For the majority of participants, being a role model meant being a face that looked like their SOC and encouraging their students to be professional and successful. To them, representation mattered. However, some of the women did not feel like role models due their institutional location.

Theme 7 - Taking Care of Self

Getting Support

Family, friends, and coworkers played a big role in the participants' lives as they tried to cope with work and life and take care of themselves in the process. Though support came from both groups, family/friends and coworkers, support looked different for each group. Having the first type of support allowed participants to cope in more personal ways and re-establish a sense of being grounded. The other type of support allowed participants to cope in more professional ways and walk away with tried and true strategies and ideas for improving next time. Family and friends often offered an escape from the job - a place where one could vent and move on, recharge, get away. Almost all of the women mentioned their mothers as their source of support.

> From my family and friends. My family and friends helped me learn that sometimes you have to say no, and it's okay to say, "No. I don't have time to do this." or not respond to e-mails, instead you get back to work my family and friends are super supportive. Being able to take time and spend [it] with them helps me recharge, and go back to work, and be fresh.
>
> Occasionally my mom and I will have conversations. [But] I don't want her to worry about me. I don't tell her everything that's going on, like if I'm having a bad day. [But] I would definitely say my friends and my family are really my support. (Lora)
>
> In my personal life, support from my friends and family. My mom is a huge, huge, huge supporter. (Mary Davis)
>
> At home, I live with my sister, so she's my ear a lot. My mom is my ear a lot, especially when I was going through my first year advising. [It] was the hardest one for me because of the lead that I had they really were like my rock at that point...my family really has helped me a lot throughout these years. (Maria)

> ...personal support, I have great access to family members. I can call my mom and talk to her about challenges or things like that. (Chris)

> I actually have a lot of personal support. My mom lives with me right now. I truly believe if my husband did not have a flexible schedule, I probably would have been fired by now, because of how much I need to take off between these two kids. He's my personal support. I probably wouldn't be able to work with the scheduling the way it works for advisors. I don't know how other people do it with kids. I have my mom. My mom cooks for me and everything. (Sheila Khan)

Coworkers, however, offered a place where one could vent and receive feedback from someone in the same boat with similar (or more) expertise. As well, peers from former jobs and master's courses provided a safe space to vent.

> Professionally, on campus, and then also to my other counseling colleagues, I have several good friends who are counselors specifically. Being able to bounce things off them even though we've been advising, they have some similarities. Being able to bounce feelings that I'm having off of another professional. That helps too. That's a big support for me. (Mary Davis)

> Believe it or not, I mean, we are quite a close knit group here. They're like family. I get support from [them]. It's great working here. It's a great work family. (Mother Hen)

> One of the biggest things is just being able to talk to my peers and bounce ideas off of them, or vent to them. (Jennifer)

> As mentioned, professional[ly], my friend advisor. We really support each other a lot.
> I also have other lead advisors from another department that, they're Caucasian, but they are nowhere near what the other experiences [are], like they are very inclusive, they love all the minorities. They support them. [My friend] is someone that always has an open door policy, she's one of my closest friends. It's having another set of eyes and ears. We really support each other...having built those relationships really helps. (Maria)

> I have really good friends who, all of them, work in some facet of education, being it K through 12 or higher education. We all understand this whole education hustle.

> I really go to them a lot for advice, like, "How do you think I should handle this situation? Is this something that should be upsetting me or am I overthinking it." I go to them for help with these challenges. They give me really good advice. Everybody needs good friends. (Lora)

> My peers, you know, they have similar experiences. So, when I say “Oh, this student...”, they understand what I mean. And um we also go see movies, or, you know, they invite me to different places and we go to different restaurants that are kind of cool. (Sheila Walker)

> They're really supportive at the job. Obviously, I get a lot of support from my fellow advisors… (HappyHeart23)

> The professional life, definitely colleagues, definitely my supervisors and superiors. And with that it's a matter of support whether it's professional support or personal support. If I'm like listen, I had a hard day...I remember actually I lost someone that was at the university, a university role that played a big part in my undergraduate role. And during that day, I think I had straight appointments, and I asked them, I said “Can I cancel my appointments for the day, close my door, and just do processing? I cannot be advising students right now”. And they were completely okay with that. So having that support their professional helps a lot. (Chris)

However, boundaries relating to support may have to be set with colleagues. As Sheila Khan suggested, leaning too much on colleagues could become weaponized in office politics. She shared:

> Whenever I need any type of support, professionally, I have my colleagues in my office that I can go to. I tread lightly whenever I ask questions because I know the politics behind workplaces. I need to run my family but they consider me competition. I still have to be very careful. (Sheila Khan)

Consistent with previous studies, WOC’s support systems benefit them and can counteract the negative impacts of the workplace (Gregory, 2001; Vakalahi & Starks, 2011). For the women in this study, familial support systems allowed the women space to ask for help and refresh from work, whereas peer and colleague support provided the

women opportunities for learning new advising strategies and handling overwhelming or crisis situations within the workplace. Yet, it is important to understand how departmental promotions and opportunities may shape and change the makeup of professional support systems.

Setting Boundaries: Leave Work at Work

The majority of the participants believed in drawing firm boundaries between work and home. Intentionally leaving work at work allowed WOC to recharge for the next day or week.

> I am a stickler for when I am at work, I am at work, and when I am not, I am not. It's funny because I shared this with some coworkers, but one of my running jokes is, "My job cannot afford to take me home." It cannot afford to come home with me. My price tag is way too high for them, so I leave them at the job. When I cross that threshold, I'm done. I don't think about it. (Jennifer)

> When I leave work, I'm gone. When I go home, when I leave work, I leave work at work.
> Every once in a while, especially [if] I don't know if we're gonna be gone over the holidays for a long time, I'll peek at my email to know what shenanigans I'm in for when I come back. But, for the most part, when I'm with my family I'm with my family. When I'm with my friends, I'm with my friends. When I'm at work I'm at work. I try not to let work encroach on my at home time or my family time. Sometimes that does get messed up, because I work Monday through Thursday. Sometimes there's stuff on Fridays and Saturday, like orientations or they'll have trainings on Fridays that get things screwy. For the most part, I feel like I have a pretty good handle on that. (Lora)

> I don't know how I'm balancing all of grad school and work at the same time...trying to balance all that, I would try to do work at school throughout the week, and then my weekends would be homework if I didn't get to it throughout the week, but for the most part I try to get away...I have to be intentional with stopping, like putting my mind to rest. Cause my mind will go if I feel bad for sitting and enjoying a rainy day. I'm like, "I could be working on this, I could be working on that. Or I could be working on this." I try to pause. (Chris)

Unfortunately, some participants struggle with work-life balance. One participant shared:

> Sadly, I don't have time for myself because I have two kids. I barely breathe. No, it's very hard. When you say balance, it's one day I'm balancing work, and one day I'm balancing family. One day I'm not balancing work and one day I'm not balancing family. What does balance mean? Things do fall. (Sheila Khan)

Most of the participants left work at work an effort to minimize and mitigate the stress of work (and/or school). What is known about WOC's experiences in higher education is that WOC are often overextended and overworked by sitting on varied formal and informal committees, serving as the token for their departments, and so much more (Turner, 2002).

Unique Themes

Texas: The Impact of Geographical Context

Not every advisor mentioned Texas. However, the three that did mention Texas discussed how their experiences as WOC are informed by the ideologies of race and racism of the state. Sheila Walker and Mother Hen suggested that African American women struggle against "Deep South" mentality when they come across students and families. Mother Hen, being from Texas and experiencing segregation as a child, found that she still experienced similar ideologies of racism and sexism with today's students and their families. Sheila Walker, who moved to Texas over a decade ago, felt that "it can be difficult to break through that, you know as an African-American woman. And so sometime I can feel the tension that a student may have when they meet with me" (2019). Opposite to these experiences, Sheila Khan shared that she has not had the same

experiences as other people in Texas. She explained, “I might have missed it. Because from what I hear from other people's experiences here in Texas, it's like how do you not get treated in a certain way? It's like, I don't know, maybe I don't pick up on it. You know? I'm not sure” (2019). Khan’s experience of not facing racial/ethnic discrimination was indeed different from Sheila Walker’s and Mother Hen’s. However, her reflection revealed that her experience is not the norm for some of the other participants in this study.

The Intersection of Advising and Cultural Gender Expectations

Advising as a feminized field emerged as a unique theme in two of the participants’ interviews. Both discussed how advising emphasizes gender roles that are traditionally attributed to women. Mary found that students were open with women advisors, regardless of race, due to gendered framings of women as more open, emotional, and caring. She believed that:

> ...being women, people are open. They're open to be vulnerable, they're open to tell you about their problems and tell you what's going on...Students have to feel comfortable with you. There are mostly women, so students are very comfortable talking with us and communicating with us…

As it related to the intersectional experiences of WOC advisors, I found Sheila Khan’s ideas about the feminization of advising unique to this study because it demonstrated that perceptions and expectations of advising may align with cultural gender expectations for some women. For Sheila Khan, the feminized field of advising aligned with the cultural expectation of women’s major task as focused on maintaining the family and not on becoming the breadwinner. At the intersection of cultural

expectations of South Asian women and gendered expectations of the feminized field of advising, Sheila found advising to be:

> ...very much a women's profession. You have to have great customer skills, you have to be very organized and detail oriented, you had to understand politics at play and the role that plays in a workplace. You had to know who to ask certain questions to. You had to know who's in charge. You have to be uber polite in declining initiatives that they want you to do. Uber politely. So seeing those things being very important in the career, made me feel like it was a women's profession. So I thought it was a good career for me to be in...That is probably some cultural stuff comes in there. My parents have always raised me that I'm not going to be the primary earner of my family. My husband would be the primary earner for my family. So I have to have a profession where I can juggle my family along with, I better have a career...That is what I saw in advising.

The Impact of Leaders of Color

The theme "Leaders of Color Make a Difference" emerged in three interviews. For the Black women below, having Black administrators and presidents brought a sense of visibility and hope, as Barack Obama did for Blacks across the country when he became president in 2008. In this way, Leaders of Color made unique impact within institutional contexts, and provided peace of mind and support for the participants. In other words, having diverse leadership made a difference in the institution. The feeling of winning, of being visible, of feeling reassured, all contributed to participants feeling supported as Black women and as advisors.

> It's few and far between of having Black women on campus. I'm not very close to our President because she's the President. But she's super supportive. I know if something needed to be done, and I needed to go to her, I probably could. So that makes ... I won when she became President. You know what I mean? (HappyHeart23)

> I don't seem as invisible [as a Black woman or as an advisor]. Does that sound bad? I hate for it to sound bad. But, I feel like I don't feel invisible now. I feel like I'm being noticed. My boss has always been that way, I have to say that. Let me clarify that. She's always been in my corner, but I feel more visible to others. Does that make sense? Like [the president] seems to, and that's weird, but he seems to honor advisors more than others did before. We seem to have a place. We seem to be professionalized in his eyes. (Mother Hen)

> There are a number of African American females, or minority females, or females of color that work at various levels. From VP levels to front desk staff levels. I don't see that there's necessarily a glass ceiling when it comes to this particular organization. [It's] reassuring to know that I can do a good job, and that job can be seen, and I can be promoted, or at least be considered for a promotion based on the work that I do. One of the benefits, there is senior leadership that is African American and female as well. (Jennifer)

Summary

This chapter presented the themes that emerged from the qualitative data collected from nine WOC professional academic advisors. The guiding research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of WOC professional academic advisors at two-year and four-year public institutions of higher education in Texas? Consequently, findings align with the aim of this study to understand how WOC perceive their experiences as professional academic advisors serving in Texas public higher education institutions. Seven general themes emerged to answer the research questions: (1) intersectional awareness, (2) intersectional bias and discrimination, (3) perceptions of advisors: how I see myself vs. how others see me, (4) complex relationships with colleagues, (5) unique relationships with Advisors of Color, (6) unique relationships with marginalized students, (7) taking care of self. The unique themes were: (1) Texas: the

impact of geographical context, (2) the intersection of advising and cultural gender expectations, and (3) the impact of leaders of color.

Using thick, rich data to represent both themes general to the group and unique to certain individuals, I provided excerpts of the raw data from each participant's interview to examine and illuminate how their experiences converge and diverge. The next chapter includes deeper interpretation of the findings, followed by recommendations for advising and institutional leaders and recommendations for future research. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with WOC advisors' advice to other WOC, limitations of the study, and implications of the study.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the prologue of this study, one could say that I was born into advising. This study emerged from stories that my mother and other Black women advisors shared with me as a young girl, the experiences of myself and other higher education professionals-in- training as young Black women, and my current interest in studying and entering into the field of advising as a Black transmyn. Unable to locate these stories and experiences in existing literature, I committed to uncovering and revealing them on my own. In many ways, I found that the stories and experiences I had grown to know were not unique when compared to the stories and experiences of the WOC advisors participating in this study. I also found that, while race, gender, and institutional role, may be similar (if not wholly the same), differences in other identities, past and present experiences, and context does indeed make a difference. By taking a group with multiple marginalized identities working in a marginal field within academia as its starting point, this study centers WOC professional academic advisors and elevates their voices. As a result, this study adds more diverse and voices experiences to advising scholarship while also further contributing to and supporting the gradually increasing research on WOC professionals' experiences in higher education. Furthermore, by centering WOC as the focal point, this study positions them as valid and valuable knowledge producers.

Using phenomenological, interviewing research methods and intersectionality as the guiding framework, this study answers the research question:

1. What are the lived experiences of WOC professional academic advisors at two-year and four-year public institutions of higher education in Texas?

Chapter Four discussed the seven general themes that emerged in this study. General themes are representative of most of the participants' experiences. Following Hycner's (1985) steps to phenomenological data analysis, I also looked for themes unique to the participants. The unique themes were: (1) Texas: the impact of geographical context, (2) the intersection of advising and cultural gender expectations, and (3) the impact of leaders of color. Each theme is considered through the critical lens of intersectionality and in dialogue with previous literature. This chapter includes a discussion of the themes and a brief section outlining WOC advisors' advice and wisdom to WOC aspiring to be and currently in academic advising. Finally, the chapter presents the limitations of the study, implications of the study, and recommendations for future research and practice.

A Return: Significance of the Study

Earlier in this study, I discussed the significance of this work. I return to the topic to discuss further the significance of this study.

The empirical gap in understanding WOC professional academic advisors' lived experiences makes this research study significant. To my knowledge, there have been no attempts to research WOC professional academic advisors' experiences. Participants in

this study worked at two-year and four-year universities across Texas. While the majority of the participants worked at Predominantly White Institutions (PWCU), some of them work at Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). To understand fully WOC advisors' experiences, more research studies, such as this one, must be conducted. Increases in studies on WOC across the academy, such as this one, provides institutional leaders better understandings of WOCs' experiences and perceptions and can create positive change, within the institution and society.

Utilizing intersectionality as the guiding framework increases the analytical significance of this study. As one of Women's Studies central concepts, intersectionality helps us to name and address human complexity and the power structures that shape and influence who goes where and how (Collins, 2000; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989/1991). Unlike other studies on advisors' experiences to date, the findings from this study helps us to understand how race and gender influenced WOC advisors' experiences and how others experienced them. Findings in this study show that WOC advisors not only face similar challenges as all other advisors, but that racism and sexism compound their experiences (among other identities). As the findings demonstrate, the majority of WOC face intersectional discrimination from students (and their families), colleagues, and supervisors. They also perceive difference in treatment compared to their colleagues. As a result, WOC advisors feel that they must prove themselves, hide their full authentic selves, and navigate the already vulnerable role of advisor. However, that is not the full story.

An intersectional analysis centered WOC voices and experiences, allowing the space for WOC advisors to have agency and be change agents. WOC advisors' distance from the often the proper advising subject – White middle-classed woman – and proper higher education subject – White upper-class man - allows for innovation, specialized knowledge, and resistance (Collins, 2000). In their experiences, the majority of participants believed their unique ways of knowing was their superpower that allowed them to propel their students and their race forward. They were other-mothers and fierce advocates that were able to foster unique relationships with their students. They were safe spaces and role models for their students and other Advisors of Color. Some, like Lora and Jennifer, even found ways to resist using humor. Eight out of nine advisors challenged traditional experiences of WOC being overworked by setting boundaries and leaving work at work. Without an intersectional lens, scholars will continue to either overlook WOC in higher education or present their experiences from deficit models. It is my hope that this intersectional study contributed to scholarly discussions with WOC's full humanity.

Contributions to this Study: WGS & Academic Advising

The field of academic advising has yet to really understand and employ intersectionality. Lack of understanding about advisors' experiences, and the ways in which social identity and categorization affect and inform advisors' experiences, limits the field as it strives to grow and keep up with its rapidly diversifying student population. If the field of advising hopes to have advisors that feel valued and want to continue

contributing to students' success, it needs to understand the unique realities and needs of all advisors.

The field of Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) informed this study in several ways. First, starting from the experiences of WOC opens up scholars understanding our advisors' experiences. A core tenet of intersectionality is starting from the experiences of multiple marginalized groups. By starting from the margins of the margins, not only do we ensure that all voices are being heard but we uncover new truths and different ways to approach an issue. Possibilities open up! Thus, studying the experiences of WOC advisors not only helps scholars and advising leaders to begin to implement practices and strategies to create better spaces for WOC advisors, but they can also begin to create better spaces and experiences for students – particularly, marginalized students. For example, the majority of WOC advisors called for support spaces for both WOC professionals and students. Participants also shared that SOC may continue to avoid advising and/or White advisors due to experiences of micro and macroaggressions. One strategy that could help begin to reduce instance of cultural incompetency is more training of White and male advisors by anti-racist, anti-sexist experts on cultural competence and cultural sensitivity as suggested by some of the participants.

Another way the WGS informed this study and advising research is by providing the space to acknowledge that and explore how multiple social identities intersect with and impact individuals' professional identities (and vice versa) and, thereby, advisors' experiences. As a result, WOC were able to give voice to their experiences of

intersectional discrimination, which is missing from academic advising scholarship. Participants' discussions around stereotyping, being deemed incompetent, and not feeling the freedom to be one's authentic self could contribute to already high rates of stress and depression, low morale, and attrition that is witness in WOC across higher education and other industry sectors. The findings in this study can help administrators begin to understand WOC advisors' experiences and continue asking intersectional questions as a way to create more culturally responsive workplace practices, change organizational cultures to be more committed to equity, and promote wellness-oriented initiatives for all advisors.

This study also contributes to WGS by applying one of its central theories to a still developing, practitioner-oriented field. WGS must continue to utilize intersectionality as a research paradigm, theoretical framework, analytical lens, and social justice tool and must not fear moving out into other fields. As WGS scholars, we must be able to continue the work of bridging theory to practice. Applying intersectionality to the practitioner-based field of advising helps Women's and Gender Studies to expand its reach and its potential for enacting change. Accurately historicizing, citing, and using intersectionality to focus on WOC and allowing it to travel into other fields bolsters Women's and Gender Studies usefulness and contributions outside of its own silo.

Interpretation of General Themes

Intersectional Awareness

As *outsiders within* (Collins, 1986), WOC professional academic advisors bring a unique perspective to their work. Specifically focusing on Black women, Collins defined the *outsider within* as a person who has some relative access inside due to one's identity, but is marginalized due to other factors. For WOC advisors, marginalized racialized and gendered identities keep them on the margins and more susceptible to unique forms of discrimination, though their roles as advisors afford them some access to institutional power. In this unique position, WOC develop unique perspectives about the ways in which their bodies are seen in U.S. society and within higher education, almost all of them making note of the link between the two. They also developed unique methods for navigating the advising space.

Participants made explicit their understandings that race and gender impacted their advising practice and how they approached their work and the world. Consistent with standpoint theory (Collins, 2000; Hartsock, 1983), the participants' narratives reflected intersectionality around shared experiences. As Collins defined it, "Standpoint theory argues that groups who share common placement in hierarchical power relations also share common experiences in such power relations" (1997, p. 377). Thus, participant's stories highlighted the complexity of living in the *both/and* of marginalization and opportunity, the impact of childhood racial socialization, past experiences within and outside of higher education, and the understanding that being

marginalized created a unique consciousness of social injustice. In particular, Black women advisors in this study felt that their identities provided a unique lens and an internal "knowing" that shaped how they viewed their experiences and their differences with White and male peers.

Armed with unique knowledge and experiences, participants shared that they used their lived experiences as tools. For many of the participants, both their bodies and their lived experiences indicated or communicated safety and welcome. Equally important, advisors used their lived experiences as WOC to connect with their students and give them more insight into the college process, particularly their marginalized students. Intersectional awareness did not stop at the intersection of race and gender for many of the participants. Other salient identities included mother, single parent, and first generation student. While race and gender are perhaps more amplified identities, in light of bias and discrimination, participants' other salient identities (e.g., first generation student status and motherhood) were key in shaping participants' knowledge and meaning-making processes, advising practices and approaches, and connection with their students and colleagues.

The theme of "intersectional awareness" aligns with research that identifies WOC's unique perspectives and multiple and differential consciousness as they are enacted in higher education and society (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1984; King, 1988; Sandoval, 1991; Sulé, 2011). The findings also support Mitchell and Rosiek's (2005) article on Advisors of Color' unique knowledge. Using Collins' Black feminist concept

of the *outsider within*, Mitchell and Rosiek (2005) argued that Advisors with common cultural backgrounds as their students are better equipped to serve them because of their share standpoint and cultural understandings. The participants in this study was in line with Mitchell and Rosiek's (2005) article, confirming with their stories the ways that Advisors of Color are able to relate to students because of shared cultural backgrounds and how Advisors of Color's lens and approach to advising is shaped by their social location. HappyHeart23 sums up what the participants shared and Mitchell and Rosiek (2005) found: "…I move about the world and every aspect of my life as a Black woman. I always factor that in, in whatever I do".

Participants in this study described many ways in which their shared cultural understandings allowed them to interact with Students of Color in different ways. For Jennifer and Lora, their knowing-in-being, outsider within status not only allowed them to relate with students, but also allowed them the access to create programming and make decision within marginalized students in mind. Additionally, participants described how their unique position meant being attuned to social injustice and use their identities to help create safe spaces for students.

Intersectional Bias and Discrimination

Intersectionality helps us understand how infinite, complex combinations of identities create qualitatively different experiences and understandings of the world. For WOC advisors in this study, unique forms of bias and discrimination emerged at the intersection of their race and gender. In discussions of bias and discrimination, as it

relates to WOC, is important to note how difficult it can be at times for WOC to pinpoint which -ism they are facing in the moment. Additionally, it is important to recognize that while WOC may sometimes solely speak to race or gender oppression, their race is gendered and their gender is raced always. In other words, experiencing racism or xenophobia as a WOC looks different from experiencing racism as a Man of Color and experiencing sexism as a Woman of Color looks different from experiencing sexism as a White woman.

Participants' stories spoke to their intersectional identities (and their accompanying oppressions), even when race and gender were discussed separately, or one identity presented itself as more salient than the other(s). For example, Lora discusses her experiences being a first generation student and seeing her students make mistakes with student loans. Trying to make sense of her experience (and the knowledge it affords her), Lora worked through a process of separating and reconnecting her experience at the intersection of race, gender, and first generation college student status. She stated:

> I don't know if this is because I'm a Person of Color of even because I'm a Woman of Color, but more so because I was a first generation college student, and to an effect, it's because I'm a Person of Color...I think having made so many mistakes as an undergraduate student, graduating is a whole mountain of loans, then just not really understanding how to navigate university life in general. I think I have a soft spot, not just for my Students of Color, not just Black students, but Hispanic students, and even some of my White students, as I see them making these same mistakes that I did. I see them racking up these loans and dropping classes. I'm like "Y'all, you're gonna have to pay this back, in full. You don't get to duck Sallie Mae forever. You gotta pay her back." (Lora)

Though she wrestled with which identity created a "soft spot" for her marginalized students, Lora's reflection illustrates how WOC both may have trouble teasing out one identity over the other and have identities be salient within context (yet, still be shaped by their other identities). Recognizing the ways in which class and socioeconomic status informs and shapes race, Lora reads intersectionality into her experience and reflects on the knowledge afforded to her through her particular standpoint.

One major way that the theme of intersectional bias and discrimination presented itself was through Black women's discussions of the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype. For them, the goal was to not be perceived as an aggressive or angry Black woman. While they did not all use the terminology of "Angry Black Woman", their interviews showed that the stereotype haunted them. Though none of them shared any present experience of being called angry, aggressive, hostile, or overly sensitive, they all disclosed the fear of being seen and labeled as the "Angry Black Woman".

The overwhelming consensus regarding participants' feelings about the *crooked room* (Harris-Perry, 2011) of the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype spoke to broader literature on Black women's experiences in higher education. Though there is very little research on the " "Angry Black Woman" stereotype in organizational and higher education literature, Scholars of Color have discussed the ways in which stereotypes are used to discipline and police Black women's (and other WOC) bodies, actions, and emotions (Griffin et al., 2013; Navarro et al., 2013; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010;

Turner, 2002; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2006). Because of the stereotype, Black women in this study did not feel safe demonstrating frustration, anger, or even "too much energy" (Sheila Walker). For them, avoiding the crooked room of the "Angry Black Woman" often meant making conscious efforts to self-monitor their behavior through tactics such as "biting my tongue" (Mary Davis) in the face of discrimination and inequality, particularly around their colleagues and campus partners.

Participants also revealed how bias and discrimination functioned in their advising sessions. As they recounted their experiences, the participants primarily discussed the ways in which students and parents' perceptions of their identity as WOC affected the advising session. In what I describe as *being stonewalled*, WOC often hit a wall of prejudice or ignorance because they are presumed incompetent from the moment a student and their family walked through the door (Lazos, 2012). Many of the participants described that they would be met with looks of surprise or experience tension, particularly if their name did not match with their perceived race. As one participant shared:

> I don't have a typical name per se. They don't think of [Sheila] as an African American woman's name. Okay? So, sometimes I'll see a student and there's a look of not surprise necessarily, but like…"Oh, okay". (Sheila Walker)

As advising sessions continued, students and parents challenged the participants' legitimacy and ability to provide accurate service. Challenges included being interrogated about knowledge and skill, silenced, shut out through lack of engagement, reported to

their supervisor. For instance, Mother Hen discussed how she would have to advise with caution because:

> if they're smiling in your face, before the day is over, you find out from your boss that someone's come and said that “this is the experience they had”. And, your boss will say:” Can you give me details? Do you remember this family? Do you remember this particular case?”

While not generalizable, the participants’ experiences of pervasive intersectional bias and discrimination with students and parents contribute to the advising literature. Within the White male-dominated context of higher education where Whiteness and maleness are both presumed competent, many of the advisors in this study were often stonewalled and presumed incompetent due to their non-White, non-male appearance. Further, where Men of Color and White women are perhaps assumed incompetent but provided the space and grace to prove themselves, WOC are presumed incompetent with different levels of success navigating the walls of prejudice, bias, and ignorance that stand before them (Gutierrez y Muhs, Niemann, Gonzalez, & Harris, 2012; Kellerman, 2003; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) . Often the participants in this study noted that difference in experiences and the liberties taken were part of larger social differences due to identity and the context in which they worked.

WOC across the institution encounter having their authority and competence challenged by students, colleagues, and administrators (Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012). However, similar to the gender and race differences that emerge between advising colleagues, there are differences that may make WOC advisors more vulnerable than their WOC faculty and administrator counterparts. Serving as frontline staff, WOC

advisors encounter students who may be assisted by their parents in the intimate, relational setting of the advising session. Parents then become yet another (stone)wall for advisors. As it relates to this theme, parents may model the behaviors and ideas that students may continue to hold as the semester continues. Additionally, parents have more immediate access to one's supervisor.

Adding to WOC advisors' experiences is a problem common to all advisors: students, faculty, and administrators continually perceive advising as the bottom of the institutional hierarchy. The relative privilege and power that faculty and administrators enjoy is not given to higher education professionals in more marginal fields like academic advising. As a result, respect is withheld as administrators make major decisions for advising without the input of academic advisors (Lora) and faculty often ignore or bypass advisors' wisdom when assisting students. Thus, there may be an increased level of precarity for WOC professional academic advisors when students, faculty, and administrators often devalue and blame advisors for everything (Mary Davis, HappyHeart23).

Perceptions of Advisors

The participants discussions about being undervalued, misunderstood, and not supported as advisors is consistent with the findings of previous studies in advising literature, mostly in dissertations (Allen & Smith, 2008; Chabinak, 2010; Donnelly, 2006; Epps, 2002; Klusmeier, 2017). However, leaders in the advising field also recognize the challenges professional academic advisors may face due to their unique position within a

(still) faculty-centered higher education context. In the book, *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook* by Gordon, Habley, and Grites (2008), experts in the field provide definitions, reflections, and key insights to new (and old) professional advisors. Defining who professional academic advisors are and outlining what they do, Casey Self (2008) noted that one distinct challenge for advisors is having to endure the consequences of others' misperceptions about professional advisors' roles and responsibilities since advising started as a faculty responsibility. The responses of the participants in this study aligned with Self's statement. Every participant spoke about how students, faculty, and administrators undervalued and relegated advisors to the status of merely registration assistance. Though the participants saw themselves as knowledgeable and caring guides, collaborators, relationship-builders, and Jills-of-all-trades who helped students be successful, they were not really treated as such. Rather, they were often invisible.

While many of the participants spoke to their (and other advisors) experiences of being undervalued by students and faculty, Lora's remarks showed a small glimpse of how advisors are treated at institutional levels. Her experiences of being on the receiving end of institutional decisions made for advisors but not created by or with advisors confirmed two studies in particular. Self (2008) suggested that institutions with little knowledge about the field, and its professionals, often make major decisions about advising without consulting academic advisors. Larson et al. (2018) extended this point, suggesting that a lack of universal definition of advising may be one contributor to an overall misunderstanding of the field. They argued that, without a common definition,

advisors are vulnerable to tone-deaf, ill-informed decisions regarding policy, practice, and assessment made by administrators with no advising background or training. Thus, though advisors were often seen as the "go-to people" (Maria), albeit only for class registration, or teachers (Mother Hen), in their own right, they often had to work against flawed student, faculty, and administrative perceptions and the institutional barriers and challenges those perceptions often created. Larson et al. (2018) outlined a few issues that could arise without a uniform, advisor-center definition of "advisor". These issues included the creation of roles and functions that are not appropriate for advisors' skillsets, (e.g., placing advisors on committees for institutional policy change) or flawed assessment of advising services, or negatively impacting how resources are allocated.

Complex Relationships with White and Male Colleagues

Though the participants shared more about their relationships and experiences with students, they also noted their complex relationships with colleagues. Participants provided full(er) pictures of these complex relationships, offering both points of (complex) commonality and points of difference. For them, commonalities were found in shared identities (e.g., race with Black men; gender with White women). Thus, they were able to relate to and empathize with White women in experiences of sexism and with Men of Color regarding racism (Mother Hen and Sheila Walker). Some participants also remarked that having Colleagues of Color allow them to be more comfortable being themselves and reject dominant understandings of "professionalism as White" (Chris). Yet, as HappyHeart23 summed it up: "it [can be] a blessing and a curse". That is, while

sharing (complex) commonalities allowed WOC advisors to build many professional relationships and solidarity with their colleagues, they also recognized moments when White women and Black men were treated differently, due to their perceived privileged statuses of Whiteness or maleness, or used their privilege to perpetuate subjugation of or bias against Black women.

Within their discussions of commonality and shared identity with colleagues, many of the participants were aware of how their race or gender made impacted their experiences. For instance, Mother Hen used the word "almost" to signal nuance in how Black women and White women may experience sexism in there advising session. To "*almost* get the same respect", meant that Whiteness was perceived to provide White women a little more respect that what she and her fellow Black woman advisor received. HappyHeart23 noted the ways in which time and cultural knowledge can impact women's experiences. Expressing empathy and understanding about her coordinator's experiences of sexism as a woman in 1970s and 1980s higher education, HappyHeart23 also discussed how her coordinator would never understand the "Black factor". For her, the "Black factor" not only shapes and informs one's knowing of the world, but being Black brings unique lived, embodied experiences that White people will never understand. The participants' experiences supported existing research that suggests that experiences and understandings of one's womanhood may vary because of one's race and that experiences and understandings of one's race may vary due to one's gender (Shields, 2008).

Previous literature suggests that WOC must learn to control their emotions and behaviors in the face of micro- and macro-aggressions, face barriers to upward mobility within the workplace, and are paid less than their peers (Browne & Askew, 2006; Hune, 2006; Leung & Gupta, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Steele, 2016). Findings in the current study were supported by this research. For many participants, others deeply internalized ideas about difference created more challenges and barriers for the participants such as less access to leadership and mobility opportunities and greater vulnerability to criticism, discrimination (e.g., microaggressions), and assault. Microaggressions are commonplace verbal and nonverbal discriminatory slights (Sue & Sue, 2010). Whether intentional or unintentional, microaggressions can be harmful and, can negatively affect an individual's physical and mental health over time.

Battling these consequences of difference often meant having to prove oneself and work harder than one's colleagues, witnessing privilege afforded to one's colleagues, and encountering microaggressions and macroaggressions from one's colleagues. Thus, the old adage of "you must work twice as hard, be twice as smart" were present in a majority of the participants' stories. These findings support the literature on WOC's experiences in higher education (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; Hannum et al., 2014; Pittman, 2010; Sue, 2010).

It is important to note that the quotes in this theme regarding commonalities and difference between WOC and their White and male colleagues were predominantly about WOC's perceptions of their White women colleagues. One reason for this focus is that

the field of academic advising is overwhelmingly comprised of women. Another potential reason, which emerged in the findings, is that Men of Color's shared racialized identities brought a sense of comfort, safety, and solidarity for WOC where fellow women's Whiteness could not. The historical nature of White supremacy and racism in the United States and WOC's experiences with White women choosing Whiteness over sisterhood may have contributed to this fact. White men were often not discussed unless the example was directly tied to them. The points of difference across both race and gender between WOC and White men coupled with the feminization of the field may be reasons for this relative absence.

Unique Relationships with Advisors of Color

Several of the participants in this study reflected on their experiences of being the only WOC in the office. They also discussed several experiences of bias and discrimination at the intersection of race and gender. As a result, though not explicitly mentioned by all, participants spoke to navigating their relationships with their White colleagues. While a few participants spoke fondly of their experiences with White allies, in particular others' experiences included deploying *masking* and *shifting* tactics around their White colleagues. Some participants elected to mask or hide certain parts of themselves from their colleagues and students while others chose to strategically overlook or skillfully address instances of bias or discrimination (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). However, eight of the nine participants found strength, comfort, and the ability to be their full authentic self in the company of other Advisors of Color and

Professionals of Color. Having other Advisors of Color contributed to WOC advisors' sense of social and psychological wellbeing.

Having other Advisors of Color and other Professionals of Color across campus created a sense of support and strength for the participants in this study. For the Black women in this study, it meant having someone who understands the spoken and unspoken struggles of working while Black. For Jennifer, the unspoken understanding provided space for crucial and unique conversations about supporting Black students to emerge. That unspoken understanding and sense of familiarity also helped Chris begin to give herself permission to embrace and be herself in her role. For Maria, the only Hispanic woman in the study, it meant having someone who could go to battle with you when speaking truth to power and still finding ways to have fun. However, a number of the participants were either the only one in their office or one of two Advisors of Color in their space and had to find community outside of their office (Gonzalez, 2007; Hall et al., 2012). For Mary Davis, the safe space and support that she did not have in her office could be found in her campus' Black professional network.

All eight participants believed that having ALANA colleagues, particularly from similar racial backgrounds, afforded them opportunities that they may not have received elsewhere. However, even when participants expressed feelings of safety and support from shared cultural backgrounds, some found that gender differences could reinforce or perpetuate subjection and power. Speaking to Men of Color's need for cultural sensitivity training, Jennifer discussed how Men of Color can sometimes treat WOC in ways (e.g.,

lack of support, see and treat as a threat) that they wouldn't treat their other male or White colleagues (Mosley, 1980). She revealed:

> I've witnessed a couple of things. I've witnessed that the assumption that the Woman of Color is always going to have your back in the workforce, and so you take advantage of that. You do things to "get over on her" that you wouldn't on someone else. Or it's the polar opposite, and you feel like she's a threat to you. So, the way that you would help or be supportive of someone else, you're not of her.

Unique Relationships with Marginalized Students

Research focusing specifically on WOC's unique relationships with marginalized students, particularly Students of Color, is scarce. However, some scholars in higher education research and in academic advising have spoken to the benefits of having advisors, faculty, and administrators of Color (Henderson, 1986; Mitchell & Rosiek, 2005). One benefit includes trust, retention, and success due to shared cultural backgrounds in faculty/staff-student relationships. While shared cultural background does not automatically mean a good advisor-advisee fit, having a shared cultural background can serve to mitigate fears of discrimination (Museus & Neville, 2012). For example, Jennifer noticed:

> I notice that I'll have students that will remember my name, but not necessarily my White counterpart's name. They'll come up and give me hugs, but not give my White counterparts hugs. It's just not the same type of interaction. I notice that they seem to do that with the other African American females as well. Sometimes that connection is rooted in the shared cultural/ethnic identity between us.

Another benefit is that the participants served as bridges between Students of Color and the institution (Gooden, 2005; Kim, 2014; Sulé, 2009). Much like Michelle in Nadler's (2007) study, the women were able to speak the *language* of their students and the language of higher education because of their unique lived experiences. More importantly, the participants were able to create a third language, one that connected the two to provide students with knowledge that would help them survive and succeed not only within the walls of higher education but outside of them. For them, having one's license or some form of identification not only meant being recognized on campus, but also in one's own town or city in case of a traffic stop in the era of increased police brutality.

The participants were not only transformative and impactful to students, but to their respective institutions. While helping their students navigate the unique culture of higher education, the participants served the institution by keeping students enrolled. Having extra or side conversations, serving on marginalized students' organizations, using their connections across campus to create new programs that centered marginalized students, and making sure that students were well-taken care of even if it meant sitting in on sessions. The participants in this study worked overtime to serve their students and institutions. Such work generally goes unseen and can add to the physical, mental, and emotional strains of WOC advisors' work.

Taking Care of Self

Taking care of oneself looked different for each participant. Some prioritized staying organized with planners to balance career and life, others exercised to manage stress. One woman traveled to see her friends and mom, while another woman used the weekends to relax and do no work. One participant even worked on weekends because she was so passionate about her work. However, the majority of participants agreed on two forms of self-care: 1) leaning on their support systems, and 2) leaving work at work.

Regarding the significance of support systems, the findings in the current study mirror previous studies on the self-care practices of WOC in higher education (Gregory, 2001; Henry, 2010; Henry & Glenn, 2009; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, Vakalahi & Starks, 2011). However, while the women found their colleagues to be supportive around advising-related issues, many still encountered instances of covert racism and found colleagues sometimes oblivious to how race/racism (and gender/sexism) impacted their work.

Participants discussed the necessity of setting boundaries around work, or *leaving work at work*. Believing that "work cannot afford [them]", as Jennifer stated, the majority of participants engaged in a number of activities in order to leave the job behind after 5:00 p.m. These activities included using planners to keep their lives organized, making checklists to bring closure to the day, redirecting energy and attention with music, and venting to someone in their support system. Little research has found WOC to put such boundaries on work, showing instead how they often do not have the privilege to erect

boundaries and thus overwork. The participants in this study who left work at work resisted not only the burden put on ALANA women by the larger society to overextend themselves, but also the capitalist burden put on employees to ignore work-life balance.

Researcher Positionality

My mother was an advisor under the TRIO programs and a general advisor at community colleges as well as large four-year universities. I was a young girl, with two sisters in tow, accompanying my mother to workshops and meeting her advising students ever since I can remember. On the way to work and on the way home, my mother shared her stories, her bright spots, and her challenges. These stories became something I would grow up not only hearing from her but also experiencing for myself and hearing from my Black women peers as I moved into my senior year of undergraduate studies and into my masters in higher education administration.

Witnessing and experiencing, I began researching and writing about Black women's experiences in higher education to connect the dots. Surely, I thought, we - my mother, my friends, and I - could not be the only ones experiencing discrimination and having to survive and make do in the academy with Do-It-Yourself strategies and, sometimes, through complicity. Surely, we were not the only ones to experience being able to make a difference in students' lives. Thus, my doctoral work in Multicultural Women's and Gender studies gave me the tools and fire to explore and uncover whatever truths WOC advisors held. That is to say, lived experience and the fact that higher

education and advising literature entirely ignores WOC provided me the perfect space to do this work. Except, I undertook this project as a Black trans man.

Transitioning as a scholar-in-training in this process of studying, researching, interviewing, and writing, encouraged me to wrestle with my outsider and insider views. While there was never a need to disclose my gender identity, identity was certainly on my mind given that my mind was full of memories and similar stories but my body and field of study communicated a stark difference from the women I interviewed. Had I still been in the embodiment of Black *woman*, difference would have still occurred as WOC are not a monolithic group. However, shared experiences around race and gender may have provided this study with different or richer findings. Thus, I am aware that my perceived Black *maleness,* PhD candidate and researcher statuses afforded privileges and influenced responses. However, the relationship between Black people, in particular, still fostered a sense of perceived community. As well, having three opportunities to speak with the participants - once over the phone and twice virtually with video - increased rapport.

While the participants' experiences were similar to their faculty and administrative counterparts, they also had unique differences, as the experiences of my mother, a veteran advisor of thirty-plus years, and other WOC advisors have shown me. Such stories, with their complex commonalities and unique differences, I know well. Because of the various ways that I have witnessed WOC advisors' experiences, specifically Black women advisors' experiences, I entered this research assuming that

WOC advisors are knowledgeable about how their multiple identities shape their interpersonal and workplace experiences, based on cultural teachings and experiences that may have caused them to develop and wrestle with double consciousness. I also approached this research assuming that WOC advisors may be well-versed in articulating concepts of race/racism and gender/sexism, with some even being, at the very least, aware of concepts like intersectionality and gendered racism. I engaged in a process of inquiry and reflection to keep such assumptions from overtaking my research.

My assumptions were correct to an extent. Very few participants had a problem speaking to their experiences. However, what I did not assume was the ambivalence that came with some participants' critiques. Slowness and uncertainty can (and often does) arise when individuals from oppressed groups are asked to critique structures and speak truth to power. However, in alignment with my assumptions, almost all participants spoke truth to power anyway dependent upon which topic energized them.

Limitations

One limitation of this study relates to transferability. Scholars often criticize phenomenology for its highly subjective focus on relatively small research populations. Thus, it is important to note that the experiences of the WOC professional academic advisors in this study may be vastly different from other WOC professional academic advisors' experiences. The findings cannot be generalized about all WOC professional academic advisors. To say otherwise would be engaging in essentialism, which does not align with the principles of intersectionality.

A second limitation of the study relates to the sample itself. It is important to note the homogenous sample in this study. As I defined it, *Women of Color* is both a label of solidarity and a label of practicality. It covers a wide range of racial/ethnic identities in confluence with gender identities (e.g., Black women, Latinx women, Multi-racial trans women, Lakota Two-Spirit woman). However, although potential participants were invited to self-define under an expanded definition of *Women of Color,* the sample included nine cisgender WOC in which seven of the participants identified as Black cisgender women. It is important to avoid framing Black women as a monolith. Though Black women's racialized gender identities were the same, nuance emerged from their conversations around other salient identities, experiences, and contexts. It is also important to remember that Black women's experiences are WOC experiences. However, the two terms should not be used synonymously, particularly when there are other WOC in the study (i.e., Latina and Asian). As a result, themes may align more with Black women's experiences than "WOC" experiences.

A third limitation of this study relates to the use of technology during the interviewing process. Using some video conferencing software (e.g., FaceTime) brought the challenge of working with and around dropped video. As a result, participants' response may have been altered. Furthermore, dropped videos could have negatively impacted participants' sense of connection or presence during the interview. However, I believe that the rapport built during the phone screening process, technology check

sessions via participants' preferred video conferencing software, and constant email engagement throughout, mitigated these effects.

One final limitation of this study involved my position as the researcher in this process. Participants may have filtered or even altered their responses due to my particular set of social and professional identities. That is, although my position as an insider researcher created connection and opportunities for shared experience, my unique positionality as a Black (trans) man researcher could have influenced participants' responses to the questions and interactions with me during the interview.

Implications

The findings in this study have implications for positive social change at varying institutional and personal levels. At an institutional level, related to academic advising research, this study offers one of the first applications of intersectionality with unique attention to advisors' experiences from advisors' perspectives. Research on the impact of race and gender (among other identities) remains understudied, especially in academic advising scholarship. Traditionally, perspectives on advisors are offered from administrators, faculty, or students, and focus on student satisfaction, professionalization, and theorizing about models, approaches, and what makes a 'good' advisor. The failure of advising scholars to address issues of identity not only overlooks and erases the ways in which difference makes a difference for advisors, but perpetuates a White-washing all too common in higher education research (even if unintentional). Continuing to avoid acknowledging and addressing how identities impact the professionalization experiences,

interactions with students and colleagues, and understandings and utilization of methods and models, will limit the field's ability to grow and ability to responsibly handle the very student populations we serve.

At institutional levels, unrelated to advising scholarship, this study contributes by providing an understanding of Women-of-Color advisors' unique experiences and needs. While this study should not be seen generalizable for all WOC advisors, the themes in this study resonate with common themes in WOC's experiences across higher education. There must be more work done to acknowledge that WOC experience the workplace differently and to account for those differences in organizational decision-making. The findings in this study provide a reference point for advising leaders who desire to eliminate barriers for WOC advisors and increase opportunities to better recruit, support, and retain the WOC in their organizations. Such findings can serve as a foundation for leaders and can hopefully move them to work with WOC to implement new strategies and support mechanisms. For instance, one such mechanism can be creating WOC advisor-centered support groups.

Additionally, administrators and leaders in the field of advising would do well to collaborate with the fields of Women's and Gender Studies, Sociology, Counseling Psychology, and others, as they begin working toward strengthening the national professional organization (NACADA), bolstering current master's programs, and implementing the new (and first) doctoral program in academic advising at Kansas State University. Adding critical/feminist theories to the curriculum will help better prepare

advisors who desire to become scholar-practitioners. As well, integrating diverse voices in curriculum, in the classroom, and on NACADA's leadership will help scholars and practitioners across identities work toward more diverse and inclusive advising scholarship, models, and practice. Centering traditionally marginalized groups such as WOC will ensure a more holistic understanding of needs and experiences within the field.

On a personal level, as it relates to the participants (and other WOC) the findings in this study will hopefully speak to any Woman of Color advisor, aspiring advisor, or higher education professional, and communicate a message that "you are not alone". The participants in this study shared wisdom and truth about WOC advisors, aspiring and current, that can help them get and stay active in the field of advising and take care of themselves, each other, and their students in the process. Furthermore, the findings suggested that WOC need more safe spaces to reflect upon and discuss their experiences and their perceptions of their respective institutions. WOC support groups and opportunities for formal and informal mentoring would be beneficial.

Finally, the results of this study and the use of intersectionality as a guiding framework indicate that WOC advisors do indeed have unique perspectives and needs. Research could be replicated to explore individual race/ethnicities (e.g., Latina, Native American, Asian, African American) more deeply or explore how the intersections of race and gender identities (e.g., Black men, Latinx trans people, Two-Spirit Indigenous persons) or race and sexuality (e.g., Queer of Color, Asian lesbian) impact advisors' experiences. Further, comparative studies on the experiences between men and women or

White advisors and Advisors of Color could be useful in extending our understanding of the (complex) commonalities and differences in advisors' experiences.

Future Research

The current study added to two broader research areas: 1) WOC in higher education and 2) academic advising. This study both supports and adds nuance to ongoing discussions about WOC in higher education and opens the door for further discussions and research on how advisors' identities impact their experiences, their students' experiences, and the field of advising overall. My research suggested many avenues of future scholarship, including:

- Exploring a larger sample of Women-of-Color advisors' experiences across the United States using of a variety of research methods. Mixed methods approaches may provide richer data and in-depth analyses of WOC professional academic advisors' experiences. Other methods such as case studies and Photovoice may provide more expansive and unique understandings of WOC advisors' experiences.
- The majority of the sample consisted of Black women. Future research should include more perspective on Latina/Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and other self-identified WOC who serve as academic advisors. Further, considering the differences in experiences between WOC advisors along organizational hierarchy (e.g., Advisor I - III, directors of advising). Researching WOC advisors at a larger

scale may prove useful for further considering the nuances in WOC advisors' experiences.

- Future researchers should look to consider the impact of other identities. "Invisible" identities (e.g., class, religion, sexuality, motherhood, student identity etc.) are often overlooked in studies that use intersectionality as a theoretical framework. While the focus on race and gender was important for this study, given the lack of research on WOC in the field, I quickly learned that other salient identities (e.g., first generation student) intersect with race and gender to make a qualitative difference in WOC's experiences and how they think about their experiences.
- Much more research should be conducted on WOC advisors' experiences with stress, burnout, and coping. Research has continued to show the negative impact of racial battle fatigue, racism and sexism (among other forms of discrimination), chronic stress on WOC's health (Bryant-Davis, 2007; Clark et al., 1999; Settles, 2004, 2006). While some of the participants in this study mention great coping and stress management skills like exercise and turning to family for support, some also hinted at the negative toll that working long hours with little resources and experience secondary trauma from working with students in crisis can have on the body and mind. As well, almost all of the Black women spoke to the need for Black women's only support groups as a place of safety and healing. Future

research may explore the uses and benefits of sista-circles as a culturally relevant strategy for Black women advisors.

- Use of intersectionality to guide comparative analyses between WOC and their White and male counterparts may prove useful for helping advising leadership to better understand the makeup of the field and of their organizations. Additionally, use intersectional paradigms, methodologies, and methods to explore other groups of advisors' experiences. For instance, how do transgender advisors perceive their experiences? What are the experiences of Men of Color advisors at community colleges? How do White advisors perceive and describe their experiences working at HBCUs in the era of Trump?
- Explore ALANA students' perceptions and experiences of ALANA advisors and White advisors.

Empowering Others: WOC Advisors' Wisdom

The WOC advisors who participated in this study recounted many stories of encountering bias and inequity and witnessing how identities, theirs and others, can impact both the advising space and advising relationships. These participants have persevered through their experiences as well as created positive change in the lives of their students and colleagues. They have done so while navigating environments and relationships where their competence and value - as both WOC and advisors - were often question and underestimated in ways they perceived their White and male peers were not.

When asked what advice or wisdom they had for aspiring and current WOC advisors, the participants had plenty of responses. They shared their lessons learned and wisdom for how to survive, rise, and take care of self and others, in the advising space. The following insights are where the participants overlapped. I will end this section with important but unique pieces of advice that the women have for aspiring and current WOC advisors.

One particular piece of advice that the women overwhelmingly shared was to continue to be yourself and keep doing what you are doing. They believe that being authentically themselves helped others (i.e., students). For some, like Sheila Walker, the advice they gave for this study was the advice that they embrace themselves. Some of the women shared:

> Keep your head up. Keep doing what you're doing. You're doing a great job. (Mary Davis)

> Please do not tear down other WOC. It's not a competition. You are absolutely capable of standing in all of your womanhood and all of your ethnicity without being threatened by or threatening another WOC. There is room at the table for all of us. Whenever possible, help out other WOC. Allow her to learn from, whether it's your mistakes or your successes, but allow her to learn from you. The things that you wish someone had done for you, be willing to do for someone else. The things that you wish had been available to you, whenever you have the opportunity, make them available for someone else. [And] never be afraid to be who you are. (Jennifer)

> Keep doing what you're doing, because you're helping somebody. Even when you don't feel like it, you're always helping people. (Lora)

> Never doubt yourself. You are in the right path. You are enough. You do not have to do more. You do not have to reinvent things. Be yourself. You never know, being authentic is exactly what's needed (Sheila Walker)

> Don't feel like you have to walk on eggshells or be less than or dim your light just because of who you are. The more you are comfortable with who you are, the more confident you are in your professional role. They play hand in hand...It sounds cliché to say "be yourself", but really, don't feel like you have to hide parts of who you are, because it does a disservice to your colleagues and it does a disservice to your students. (Chris)

The participants also suggested that getting active in the office and in professional organizations like NACADA will help other WOC in advising. Getting active could include knowing why you chose to work in advising and to present at NACADA. They shared:

> If you're going into academic advising, know your field. If you can become a part of professional organizations within your field, take every opportunity to do that. If you have the opportunity to present at different conferences, or meetings, things like that, take the opportunity to do that. (Jennifer)

> Know why you want to get into advising, what's your why? Why do you want to get into advising? What aspects of it appeal to you or attract you to that particular role? (Chris)

> Get active in organizations like NACADA. Get active if you want to be recognized. You have to understand how the game is played. Have to figure out what the power dynamics are in your office. See what the whole ideas of the office are. Find out where your fit is in the office and then really pushing to make it happen. (Sheila Walker)

Another major piece of advice: stick together. The participants believed in and showed the importance of uplifting other WOC in spaces that often try to keep them down or "in their place". In sharing their advice, some of them explicitly spoke to the need for WOC to stick together and help each other in the advising space and higher education in general.

> I know it's hard. I can't promise that it's gonna get easier. But, if we stick together and know that we're not the only ones out there going through things like this, it's

> something that helps you or at least it helped me. Know that somebody else is also going through this. Find someone, find an ear, write it down, some kind of outlet that helps you express it. (Maria)

> Please do not tear down other WOC. It's not a competition. You are absolutely capable of standing in all of your womanhood and all of your ethnicity without being threatened by or threatening another Woman of Color. There is room at the table for all of us. Whenever possible, help out another Woman of Color. Allow her to learn from, whether it's your mistakes or your successes, but allow her to learn from you. The things that you wish someone had done for you, be willing to do for someone else. The things that you wish had been available to you, whenever you have the opportunity, make them available for someone else. [And] never be afraid to be who you are. (Jennifer)

One other important piece of advice is have a support system. The women in this study credited their support systems for keeping them sane, helping them unpack their workplace experiences, and teaching them. Their support systems included family, friends, and especially peers in similar fields.

> If you haven't already made friends with people in education or in higher ed, or you don't already know somebody, get yourself a group of people who understand what you're talking about when you come home and you're just like, "Ugh, students." There needs to be people who you can talk to about that. Unless you work in a university or in a college, there's really no one to translate that experience. When I go on my Facebook group and I tell my friends, "Y'all orientation." They're like, "Yeah, I know. I know. It's hard." You need people like that. Whether it's through a professional organization or if you make friends, get yourself a support system that won't mind if you complain for two hours Build relationships was another important piece of advice from the women. (Lora)

The participants advised WOC to also build relationships. Relationship-building is the name of the game in academic advising, and who you build relationships with matters. For HappyHeart23, WOC should:

> Always be smart. I don't want to say smart, but be aware of what kind of people you're working with and how to foster those relationships. Know who you can trust, know who you can't, and act accordingly.

Maria shared:

> Sometimes in the protocol, as far as like who to go talk to, you may not trust that person.
> Find somebody that is up there that you will trust, that you know will listen to you and start something towards helping you right now.

However, while building relationships is important, it is also important to know when to end relationships. As Jennifer suggested:

> Know that it is okay to let relationships go. You feel like you have to hold onto them; you become over stretched trying not to lose [them]. You'll know when it's time to let them go. It's okay to move in a different direction, and to build new relationships. It's also okay to let those older relationships go, the ones that no longer serve a purpose, the ones that are maybe taking advantage of you, the ones that are costing you more than you can afford to give.

Some participants also shared that aspiring and current WOC advisors would do well to learn how to take constructive criticism. Sheila Khan offered this advice:

> Be ready to accept constructive criticism.

HappyHeart23 built upon Sheila Khan's advice adding that constructive criticism typically will come from someone who is invested in your success.

> Be able to take criticism. Don't get upset if someone [gives] constructive criticism, let me be specific. Most of the time, the people that are going to criticize you, and they're gonna come to you and tell you that, is somebody that cares about you and your wellbeing.

Finally, each woman had powerfully unique pieces of advice to offer. I list them below (in no particular order):

> Be aware of those different nuances. There's a heightened sense of awareness that comes to advising as a Woman of Color. It's gonna depend on who you're with, what type of student you're working with. Looking like "Okay I'm gonna be working with students or colleagues and staff alike who look like me, but also are

different from me, and so there's not a one size fits all as far as how to connect with everybody". (Chris)

The hard part is you might be the only Person of Color in your office. There may be very few of you. Remember [that] people have expectations about different People of Color and that your expectations might not match up with the office expectations. Understand that you might get blindsided from time to time. Recognize that not everybody is going to be on the same page as you. (Sheila Walker)

Be mindful that as a female sometimes the industry will try to pull on you. It will try to ask more of you than your male counterparts. It will expect you to say yes more than your male counterparts. It is absolutely okay to say "no"; it is still professional to say "no". (Jennifer)

CYA. Cover your ass. (HappyHeart23)

Definitely get beyond the bachelors. A masters is, you need it, because always your education is going to be in question by your ... not just your peers, but by your students, and the parents. (Mother Hen)

Don't let yourself fall in the shadows. From the very beginning, put yourself out there.
Show them. Sometimes just being a hard worker and being quiet is not enough. You need to verbalize, "I am interested in this. If you haven't thought of somebody, take me into consideration because I would like to go. I would like to do this. I would like to be in charge of this." Be more [vocal] as far as opinions. [But] be careful about your opinions as far as like you don't have to just blab anything you want. Offer constructive suggestions… (Maria)

Make sure that you connect with your students. You are going to impact someone's life.
The way in which you do is up to you. Be mindful that you are impacting someone's life
whenever possible, choose to have a positive impact in their lives. (Jennifer)

Have some integrity. Be honest. [And] take accountability for mistakes. Be open to that.
Just because you make a mistake doesn't mean that you're bad. (HappyHeart23)

Always do your homework. (Sheila Khan)

> Always be positive. Be positive about education, and about [students] pursuing education. (Mother Hen)
>
> Be intentional and tak[e] the time to learn your student. (Chris)
>
> Find out where that balance is between aggressiveness and being open to suggestions. (Sheila Walker)
>
> Try to see the beauty in what you're doing. Sometimes you can get a little burnt out. If you love what you're doing and you're working with students, try to make sure and take time to see the beauty of that. Go to graduation. It is worth it when you have seen a student grow from a freshman to graduation, it is humbling. It reassures you to let you know what you're doing is right, and it's changing the world. (HappyHeart23)
>
> Seek out challenges. Always know something can be done better. (Sheila Khan)
>
> Try to continue to be that role model. Role model as in "look at me, you can do it too"...You see, I see, we do, I do, I teach, we teach. Somebody's looking. They're always going to be [looking for] a role model. Try to get them into that role model role. (Mother Hen)

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of WOC who serve as professional academic advisors at public colleges and universities. Using intersectionality as a guiding framework, this study explored the research question: What are the lived experiences of WOC professional academic advisors at two-year and four-year public institutions of higher education in Texas? This research added to the limited body of literature on WOC's experiences in academic advising and the growing scholarship on WOC's experiences in higher education, more broadly.

A discussion of the seven general themes and three unique themes that answered the research question were presented. Additionally, this chapter presented the significance, implications, and limitations of this study, recommendations for future research, and the participants' own words of advice and wisdom to other WOC who may be aspiring or current professional academic advisors. Nine self-identified WOC professional academic advisors participated in individual semi-structured interviews with the researcher using video-conferencing software (e.g., Google Hangouts, FaceTime, and Skype).

It is my hope that this dissertation will serve as a starting point, encouraging other scholars and advisors-in-making to continue the discussion on advisors' experiences and the impact of intersectionality on advisors' and students' experiences. It is also my hope that this dissertation will encourage scholars and administrators to take seriously the needs and experiences of WOC advisors so that they may feel affirmed in their workplaces and may serve as a bridge to increasingly diverse student populations. As several of the participants in this study pointed out: We have to value both our students and our advisors equally if we are to continue achieving student success. Finally, my hope for this dissertation is that it will fall into the hands of WOC advisors (and advisors-to-be and that they will be encouraged by the strength, resilience, and wisdom of their fellow WOC advisors.

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APPENDIX A
REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE EMAIL

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE EMAIL

Hello,

My name is Elia Tamplin and I am a doctoral student in Texas Woman's University's Multicultural Women and Gender Studies program. I am inviting WOC who work in academic advising to participate in my dissertation study titled "A Qualitative Exploration of Women-of-Color Professional Academic Advisors' Perceptions and Experiences," and your assistance is desired. In order to complete this study, I will need to interview self-identified WOC who meet certain criteria and I am seeking your assistance to help me contact those advisors who you think meet the criteria.

I am asking that you forward the attached message to advisors who meet the following criteria:

- Self-identifies as a Woman of Color.
- Is a professional academic advisor, based on the definition provided, and works within academic advising.
- Has at least one year of experience in their current position.

For this study, I am defining *Woman of Color* as:

An inclusive term for non-White women (e.g., cisgender women, transgender women, gender nonconforming persons who for professional reasons may find this language most appropriate) who use this particular language to self-define and describe their experiences within the professional workplace of academic advising. Specifically, the term "WOC" is one that recognizes all WOC's individual and shared experiences of oppression at the intersection of race, class, and gender identity/expression in relation to western and European-based cultures. A few examples of how WOC might identify themselves include: Black, Latina, Asian-American, Bi-racial, Hispanic, Native American, African American, Multi-ethnic, Indigenous, Asian, Arab American, Multi-Racial, Jewish, and so on.

As well, I am defining *professional academic advisor* as:

Bachelor's, master's, and sometimes PhD degree-holding professionals whose full-time job responsibility is to facilitate students' development, integration (retention and persistence), and graduation (Cook, 2009) within academic advising spaces.
For this study, I exclude faculty advisors and advising administrators (unless, I come across a participant that is in the transition from advisor to administrator during the time of the study). Many terms will be used interchangeably with "professional academic advisors" including: advisors, academic advisors, academic counselors, and professional advisors.

Thank you for your willingness to help me recruit potential participants for my study. Participation is voluntary, and advisors who choose to participate have the option to stop answering questions and/or stop participating at any time.

Please distribute the attached message to all academic advising members. Those who meet the criteria should contact me at etamplin@twu.edu.

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

Sincerely,
Elia Tamplin

APPENDIX B
LETTER OF INVITATION FOR PARTICIPATION

LETTER OF INVITATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Hello,

My name is Elia Tamplin and I am a doctoral student in Texas Woman's University's Multicultural Women and Gender Studies program, I am inviting WOC who work in academic advising to participate in my dissertation study titled "A Qualitative Exploration of Women-of-Color Professional Academic Advisors' Perceptions and Experiences." The purpose of this research is to explore the complexity of experiences of Women-of-Color professional academic advisors in Texas colleges and universities. My goal is to hear your thoughts on your experiences as an advisor, the challenges and opportunities you have experienced as an advisor, your recommendations for how you can be better supported in this role, and your advice for WOC advisors and advisors-to-be.

To be eligible for participation in this study, you must self-identify as a *Woman of Color*, work as a full-time academic advisor, and have at least one year, minimum, of experience in your current position.

*For this study, I am defining *Woman of Color* as:

An inclusive term for non-White women (e.g., cisgender women, transgender women, gender nonconforming persons who for professional reasons may find this language most appropriate) who use this particular language to self-define and describe their experiences within the professional workplace of academic advising. Specifically, the term "WOC" is one that recognizes all WOC's individual and shared experiences of oppression at the intersection of race, class, and gender identity/expression in relation to western and European-based cultures. A few examples of how *WOC* might identify themselves include: Black, Latina, Asian-American, Bi-racial, Hispanic, Native American, African American, Multi-ethnic, Indigenous, Asian, Arab American, Multi-Racial, Jewish, and so on.

As well, I am defining *professional academic advisor* as:

Bachelor's, master's, and sometimes PhD degree-holding professionals whose full-time job responsibility is to facilitate students' development, integration (retention and persistence), and graduation (Cook, 2009) within academic advising spaces.
For this study, I exclude faculty advisors and advising administrators (unless, I come across a participant that is in the transition from advisor to administrator during the time of the study). Many terms will be used interchangeably with "professional academic advisors" including: <u>advisors, academic advisors, academic counselors, and professional advisors.</u>

Participation in the Study
Your part in the study will include completing a telephone screening to determine your eligibility before meeting with me for a technology check and semi-structured, audio-recorded, virtual interview using a video conferencing application (e.g., Skype, FaceTime, etc.). The technology check will take up to 60 minutes to test technological functioning and allow you ask the researcher any questions that you may have at the time. Our interview will take about 2 hours to complete. You may also be invited to participate in member checking (up to 2 hours) and a 45-60 minute follow-up interview over the course of the study to clarify or expand upon your thoughts for a maximum time commitment of 6 hours. Participation is voluntary, and you have the option to stop answering questions and/or stop participating at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond to this email as soon as possible. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

Sincerely,
Elia Tamplin

APPENDIX C
FOLLOW-UP LETTER OF INVITATION FOR PARTICIPATION

FOLLOW-UP LETTER OF INVITATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Hello,

My name is Elia Tamplin and I am a doctoral student in Texas Woman's University's Multicultural Women and Gender Studies program, I am inviting WOC who work in academic advising to participate in my dissertation study titled "A Qualitative Exploration of Women-of-Color Professional Academic Advisors' Perceptions and Experiences." The purpose of this research is to explore the complexity of experiences of Women-of-Color professional academic advisors in Texas colleges and universities. My goal is to hear your thoughts on your experiences as an advisor, the challenges and opportunities you have experienced as an advisor, your recommendations for how you can be better supported in this role, and your advice for WOC advisors and advisors-to-be.

To be eligible for participation in this study, you must self-identify as a *Woman of Color*, work as a full-time academic advisor, and have at least one year, minimum, of experience in your current position.

*For this study, I am defining *Woman of Color* as:

An inclusive term for non-White women (e.g., cisgender women, transgender women, gender nonconforming persons who for professional reasons may find this language most appropriate) who use this particular language to self-define and describe their experiences within the professional workplace of academic advising. Specifically, the term "WOC" is one that recognizes all WOC's individual and shared experiences of oppression at the intersection of race, class, and gender identity/expression in relation to western and European-based cultures. A few examples of how *WOC* might identify themselves include: Black, Latina, Asian-American, Bi-racial, Hispanic, Native American, African American, Multi-ethnic, Indigenous, Asian, Arab American, Multi-Racial, Jewish, and so on.

As well, I am defining *professional academic advisor* as:

Bachelor's, master's, and sometimes PhD degree-holding professionals whose full-time job responsibility is to facilitate students' development, integration (retention and persistence), and graduation (Cook, 2009) within academic advising spaces.
For this study, I exclude faculty advisors and advising administrators (unless, I come across a participant that is in the transition from advisor to administrator during the time of the study). Many terms will be used interchangeably with "professional academic advisors" including: <u>advisors, academic advisors, academic counselors, and professional advisors.</u>

Participation in the Study
Your part in the study will include completing a telephone screening to determine your eligibility before meeting with me for a technology check and semi-structured, audio-recorded, virtual interview using a video conferencing application (e.g., Skype, FaceTime, etc.). The technology check will take up to 60 minutes to test technological functioning and allow you ask the researcher any questions that you may have at the time. Our interview will take about 2 hours to complete. You may also be invited to participate in member checking (up to 2 hours) and a 45-60 minute follow-up interview over the course of the study to clarify or expand upon your thoughts for a maximum time commitment of 6 hours. Participation is voluntary, and you have the option to stop answering questions and/or stop participating at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond to this email as soon as possible. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

Sincerely,
Elia Tamplin

APPENDIX D
TELEPHONE SCRIPT

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Hello,

My name is Elia Tamplin. Thank you for responding to my recruitment email and indicating interest in participating in my study. I am a doctoral student in Multicultural Women's and Gender Studies at Texas Woman's University (TWU) where I am completing this dissertation study as a part of my degree.

"The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the complexity of experiences of Women-of-Color professional academic advisors in Texas colleges and universities. My goal is to hear your thoughts on your experiences as an advisor, the challenges and opportunities you have experienced as an advisor, your recommendations for how you can be better supported in this role, and your advice for WOC advisors and advisors-to-be."

"Before enrolling people in the study, I need to determine if you are eligible to participate. I would like to ask you a series of questions. As a reminder, to be eligible for participation in this study, you must self-identify as a *Woman of Color*, currently work as a full-time academic advisor at a college or university in Texas, and have at least one year, minimum, of experience in your current advising position.

"As I stated in the recruitment letter, I am defining *WOC* as an inclusive term for non-White women (e.g., cisgender women, transgender women, gender nonconforming persons who for professional reasons may find this language most appropriate) who use this particular language to self-define and describe their experiences within the professional workplace of academic advising. Specifically, the term "WOC" is one that recognizes all non-White women's individual and shared experiences of oppression at the intersection of race, class, and gender identity/expression in relation to western and European-based cultures."

"I will keep all the information I receive from you by phone, including your name and any other identifying information confidential."

1. Do you identify as a *woman*?
2. Do you self-identify as a Woman of Color?
    a. What do you consider your ethnicity?
    b. What do you consider your race?
3. For which college or university do you work?
4. What do you consider your job title?
5. How long have you worked in your current position?

If the participant is not eligible, I will say the following: “Thank you for your interest in the study. Do you know of anyone that you believe would be interested in the study?”

If the participant is eligible, I will say the following: “Based on your answers, it appears you are eligible to participate in the research study. Now, I will read the consent form to you (Appendix E).”
After reading the consent form, I will then ask the individual if they would like to participate in the study.

If no, I will thank the individual for their time; ask if they know anyone they believe would be interested in the research study.

If yes, “What questions do you have so far?” (All questions will be answered by the researcher).

“As indicated in recruitment letter, interviews for this research study will be held using video conferencing application (e.g., Skype, Google Hangouts, etc.). Due to the technological platform, you can choose to hold the interview from your office, home, or any other private comfortable space of your choice."

After they answer...

"Great. When would you like to meet? Which digital platform would you like prefer using? What time would you like to meet? Would you liked to be emailed to texted with the confirmation reminder? I will email or text (based on their preference) you with a confirmation two days prior to our meeting. The confirmation will include the date and time of our meeting.”

“Due to the nature of our virtual meeting, I would also like to set up a time and date for us to check technology. Ideally, this meeting would take place at least a week before our interview. “When would you like to meet for the technology check? What time would you like to meet? I will email or text (based on their preference) you with a confirmation two days prior to our meeting. The confirmation will include the date and time of our meeting.”

After arranging the meeting times for the technology check and interview, I will ask the individual if they have any more questions.

If yes, “What questions do you have?” (All questions will be answered by the researcher).

If no, “Thank you for your time. I will be sending you an email with the consent form for you to read, sign, scan, and email back to me. It is important that you keep a copy of the consent form for yourself. Please keep in mind that we cannot meet for the technology check session nor the interview until I have your signed consent form. If you have any questions that arise, please feel free to contact me at etamplin@twu.edu or call me at 309-684-3181. I look forward to receiving your consent form and meeting you on the (date), (time), and (place) for our technology check session.

APPENDIX F
REQUEST FOR SIGNED CONSENT FORM

REQUEST FOR SIGNED CONSENT FORM

Dear [Participant First Name],

I really enjoyed our telephone conversation. Thank you again for agreeing to participate in my study. I really look forward to hearing your story.

Attached to this email is the consent form you must sign in order to participate in this study. The consent form informs you of the purpose of the study, your role in the study, and your rights throughout the study. Please read, sign, and scan the consent form. It is important that you keep a copy for yourself and email me a copy at your earliest convenience. You cannot participate without the signed consent form returned to me.

Remember that participation is voluntary, and you have the option to stop answering questions and/or stop participating at any time without question or penalty.

If you have any questions about the consent form or any other part of this study, please contact me at etamplin@twu.edu.

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

Sincerely,
Elia Tamplin

Enclose: Dissertation Consent Form

APPENDIX G
TECHNOLOGY CHECK: CONFIRMATION REMINDER

TECHNOLOGY CHECK: CONFIRMATION REMINDER

Email or text (based on participant preference) confirmation after scheduling the technology check.

“Hello, this is Elia. As promised I am informing you to confirm our upcoming technology check meeting. We are scheduled to meet via (digital location), on (date) at (time). I will see you then. Please let me know at your earliest convenience should you need to reschedule.”

APPENDIX H
INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION REMINDER

INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION REMINDER

Email or text (based on participant preference) confirmation after scheduling the interview.

“Hello, this is Elia. As promised I am informing you to confirm our upcoming interview. We are scheduled to meet via (digital location), on (date) at (time). I will see you then. Please let me know at your earliest convenience should you need to reschedule.”

APPENDIX I
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant Code: _____

Participant Name: _____

Participant Alias: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Pre-Interview Checklist

1. **Recap**: Reintroduce Self and the Study
2. **Read:** As you know, I am a doctoral student interested in exploring the experiences of women-of-color professional academic advisors. Today's interview will last approximately 120 minutes.
3. **Review**: Informed Consent
4. **Ask**: I would like to audio record our conversation today in order to transcribe the data and include pertinent information in my dissertation. Do I have your permission to audio record this conversation?
5. **Read**: As you know, all of your information will remain confidential and I will use an alias/pseudonym for your name. What would you like for your alias/pseudonym to be for this study?
6. **Read**: As a reminder, you have the right to not answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time.

7. **Ask**: Do you have any questions about the interview or the research ? (Answer questions)
8. **Read**: Now we will move on to the question portion of our interview.

Interview Questions

Demographic Question

Read: First I would like us to talk about how you identify and how you describe yourself.

1. How do you identify?

- If they need the questions restated: What do you based your identity on?
- If they are stumped by the question: an example will be provided if necessary) For example, I identify as…

***Regardless of answer: Repeat back their self-identification for clarification, informing them that this identifier will be used throughout the remainder of the interview.

Advisor Background Questions

Read: We will now shift gears and talk about your advising background.

1. How long have you been in the field of academic advising? How long have you been advising at your institution?
2. What brought you to the profession of academic advising?
    1. How did your identity as a [insert race/ethnicity] woman impact your decision to enter the field of academic advising?
3. Please describe what being an academic advisor means to you.

    1. How is your advising approach and style impacted by your lived experiences as a [insert race] woman?
4. What brought you to your current institution?
    1. What factors did you consider when searching for colleges and universities to work at?
    2. How did your identity as a [insert race/ethnicity] woman impact your decision to work at your institution?
    3. How has your advising approach and advising style been influenced or changed by working at your institution?

Current Experiences in Advising Question:

Read: Now that we've discussed your background a little bit, let's talk about your more current experience as an advisor.

1. How would you describe your current role as an academic advisor? (nature of the role, official title, current responsibilities, reporting line, overall institutional organizational structure)
2. Please describe a "typical day" for you in your current position. (Describe your working conditions, i.e., compensations, resources, hours spent at the job, support, and etcetera.)
3. What do you feel are the unique challenges or disadvantages of being a [insert race/ethnicity] woman advisor in your department? University?

4. What do you feel are the unique opportunities or benefits of being a [insert race/ethnicity] woman advisor in your department? University?
5. In what ways do you believe your experiences are different from or similar to your:
    1. White men colleagues?
    2. White women colleagues?
    3. Men of Color colleagues?
    4. Other WOC colleagues?
6. Please describe how being a [insert race/ethnicity] woman affects:
    1. Your professional relationship with the students you serve. How does this make you feel?
    2. Your professional relationship with your colleagues. How do you feel about this?
    3. Your professional relationships with other campus partners (i.e., other staff, faculty members, administrators). How do you feel about this?

Self-care and Work/Life Balance Domain of Advising Questions

Read: Thank you for sharing so much about your current experiences. In thinking about these experiences that you face as a [insert race/ethnicity] women in your department:

1. Please describe how you manage or cope with challenges and barriers.
2. Where do you receive support in your personal and professional life?

3. How do you balance work, family, and/or other obligations in your life?

Hopes and Transformation Questions

1. In what ways do you try to be an agent of significant change for your students?
    1. What barriers do you face in trying to be an agent of significant change for your students?
2. Do you view yourself as a role model for Students of Color on your campus?
    1. If so, in what ways do you try to reach out to and connect with them?
3. Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years? How do you see yourself getting there?

Recommendations and Wisdom Questions

Read: The next few questions will allow you to share some of your wisdom with others and do some re-envisioning of advising.

1. What advice would you give to future WOC advisors?
2. What advice or wisdom would you like to share with current WOC in advising?
3. If you had endless resources available to enhance the support for WOC advisors, what would you change?
4. If you were the Vice President of your division, how would you change advising?
5. If you were designing it, what would your ideal advising office/center look like? How would it feel? What would be the experience for WOC advisors?

Wrap Up

Read: Thank you so much for your time today. Your voice and experience is much appreciated and your wisdom, invaluable.

1. Is there anything I didn't ask that you would like to talk about today?

APPENDIX J
MEMBER CHECK REQUEST EMAIL

MEMBER CHECK REQUEST EMAIL

Hello [Participant First Name]

I want to thank you again for participating in my dissertation study on Women-of-Color professional academic advisors working at colleges and universities in Texas. Attached are verbatim transcriptions of our interview. I have reviewed the transcripts and made notes about my thoughts or our conversation, making connections to larger themes. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure confidentiality.

Please read through the transcripts, notes, and themes checking for accuracy of my interpretations to your answers. Your participating will ensure that I am accurately understanding and recapping your experience as it was shared. If you believe that I have misstated anything, please feel free to correct the information and return your corrections to me. If you feel that I have captured your statements accurately, please inform me via email at etamplin@twu.edu.

I have provided the questions (below) to assist you in the completion of this process. Please take a moment to reflect upon the transcripts and themes presented and answer the following questions.

1. What are your initial impressions of the themes presented? To what extent do you agree or disagree?
2. How do these themes resonate with your experiences?
3. What additions/amendments/deletions would you suggest in relation to these themes?
4. What thoughts or reflections have you had since participating in this study as it relates to your experiences as a WOC advisor?
5. Are there any additional comments you'd like to add?

After you complete the review, please email me the revised copy of the member-checked transcript and your answers to the questions above.