"Showing Up": An Autoethnographic Exploration of Black Women's Teaching Mentorship Narrative in Counselor Education

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Cover Page Footnote

We utilize the term channel in opposition to the traditional pipeline metaphor to be sensitive to the significance of pipelines to indigenous and native populations in this country.

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Abstract

While Black women are entering academe at increasing rates, they still remain underrepresented in the counselor education academic workforce. Empirical literature suggests that lack of educational infrastructure, challenging sociocultural climates, and fewer possibility models within academe are factors for low matriculation of Black women doctoral students into academic positions in counselor education. Utilizing collaborative autoethnography (CAE), we explore teaching mentorship relationships among Black women (N = 4) counseling faculty and doctoral students. We also examine how mentoring relationships shape Black women's professionalization within academe in a manner that fosters the embodiment and practice of social justice andragogy. CAE narratives revealed teaching mentorships promote social justice–based teaching andragogy, create a liberative cultural praxis of community, and provide a blueprint for transformative praxis among mentees in counselor education training programs. Implications for counselor educators from our findings identify the importance of implementing programmatic infrastructure and culturally-responsive mechanisms to be considered in support of Black women students' matriculation into academe.

Significance to the Public

This study advances scholarly evidence for the relevance and importance of Black women teaching mentorship relationships to support the professional preparation and development for Black womxn doctoral students interested in becoming counselor education faculty. Additionally, it highlights how African-centered principles and values help to create sustainable mentorship relationships for Black womxn to counter negative messages, buffer the effects of erasure of Black womxn's experiences, and create a community of possibility and affirmation.

Keywords: mentorship, counselor education, psychology, teaching, Black women

Black women are entering higher education graduate programs at the highest rate recorded in educational history (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). However, the student to faculty channel[1] appears defective, as only a small percentage of Black doctoral graduates in counselor education doctoral programs are entering the academic workforce (CACREP, 2023). Specifically within CACREP-accredited counselor education programs, the recent increase in Black and/or African American students has increased in recent years (25%). However, that increase scarcely reflects the same demographic pattern in counselor education academic faculty positions (16%). Researchers attribute diversity within the academic workforce to the intentional process of recruiting underrepresented students or future faculty into graduate programs, particularly at predominately white institutions (PWI; Ju et al., 2020). However, this scholarship assumes that recruiting students from underrepresented backgrounds is sufficient in producing inclusion and diverse representation

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within faculty positions at PWIs without considering how systemic forces (i.e., institutional policies, evaluation standards) reproduce inequitable challenges and barriers for minoritized individuals seeking a career in academe (Kelly et al., 2017; Pérez & Carney, 2018). Among Black students and early career professionals, individual level actions (i.e., targeted recruitment) have failed to support the successful matriculation of Black students into the professoriate (Brooks & Steen, 2010; Ju et al., 2020). Given the ongoing challenges in diversifying the counselor education workforce, coupled with the field's momentum toward social justice–based and antiracist praxis at all levels of academia, the underrepresentation of Black faculty within higher education institutions is a crisis evident at all levels.

Studies on Black women doctoral students conclude that Black women experience misogynoir inside the classroom setting when interacting with faculty and their peers (Horsford et al., 2019; Zeligman et al., 2015). In addition to unsafe and hostile academic environments, Black women graduate students often experience alienation and isolation, resulting from the lack of critical mass among Black students and faculty within their programs and around campus (Grant & Simmons, 2008; Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021). These experiences are important, as scholars have identified the essential role that Black faculty representation and presence has on the overall success of Black women students (e.g., possibility models, navigational mentorship, professional sponsorship) matriculating through their doctoral programs and to the professoriate (Chapman & Wilkerson, 2020; Griffin et al., 2013).

With teaching often comprising 50% of job responsibilities for counselor education faculty positions, teaching mentor relationships for Black women in higher education are essential (Suddeath et al., 2020; Waalkes et al., 2018). These mentor relationships may be an important foundation for understanding how and in what contexts Black faculty-track women are prepared to engage the practice of social justice teaching in counselor education classrooms. Thus, the goal of this article

is to shed light on how teaching-specific mentor relationships foster interpersonal, navigational, and professional skills that encourage Black faculty-track women to unapologetically "show up" and engage teaching practice that centers decolonization, social justice, and liberation.

The mentee and mentorship relationship discussed in this study embodies the cross-discipline teaching mentorship relationship that supported the training of counselor education and counseling psychology students at our institution. While we are aware of the differences among ideology and scope of practice of these disciplines, we acknowledge that both fields are invested in the effective training of future counseling professionals to work with diverse individuals, students, and community members, and that the findings and implication of this work could benefit Black women doctoral students in both disciplines, given the similar pathway concerns.

Black Women Mentorship Experiences

The literature on mentoring experiences and Black women within doctoral programs is scant (Patton & Harper, 2003). Narratives of Black students in higher education reveal interest from Black women to participate in mentoring relationships (Grant & Simmons, 2008; Patton & Harper, 2003; Rasheem et al., 2018); however, Black doctoral students who intend to pursue careers in academe, often experience a void or absence of professional mentorship, due to the lack of Black faculty in their counselor education and psychology programs or departments, or due to limited connections of current faculty to Black faculty across the United States (Brooks & Steen, 2010; Patton, 2009; Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021). This void or limited connection to Black faculty may be partially explained by the pressure of tenure obligations that often impede time and capacity for Black faculty to cultivate mentoring relationships with Black students (Gooden, 2020; Pérez & Carney, 2018). Relatedly, some Black doctoral students may elect not to reach out to Black faculty in recognition of the unique additional labor (e.g., cultural taxation, invisible labor, navigating unclear expectations for

tenure and promotion; Griffin, 2013; Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017; Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021) that Black faculty experience due to their racial/ethnic and gender identities. As with all faculty-track doctoral students, experience with research, teaching, and professional/leadership service contribute greatly to being perceived as a strong faculty candidate; however, for Black faculty-track women the experience of entering academe may be more complex given the nuances of negotiating both institutional demands and the systemic realities of holding multiple marginalized identities (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2004; Kelly et al., 2017; Zambrana et al., 2015). Thus, mentorship throughout doctoral programs is essential in helping to guide, support, and advocate for Black faculty-track counselor education doctoral students as they prepare for the responsibilities of faculty jobs.

Due to the lack of Black women in faculty positions or positions of power within academe, Black women tend to engage more often in cross-racial and cross-gender mentoring relationships (Brown & Grothaus, 2019; Louis et al., 2018). Literature on the effectiveness of identity-congruent mentoring versus identity-incongruent mentoring offers mixed results. Based on the literature we cannot establish definitively that identity-congruent mentorship relationships are more efficacious than identity-incongruent mentor relationship, however, the common elements of identity-congruent and incongruent mentor relationships (i.e., culturally-responsive communication, attention to power dynamics, sociocultural awareness, creation of safe spaces) are necessary to foster success among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students (Bryant et al., 2016; Louis et al., 2018; Park-Saltzman et al., 2012; Suriel et al., 2018). For example, in a critical coconstructed autoethnography, gendered cross-cultural mentoring relationships helped to create safe spaces, by centering Latinx values, extending family networks, and fostering resiliency; each of these factors served as a buffer to attrition of Latinx scholars in higher education (Suriel et al., 2018). Other scholarship suggests that positive cross-cultural mentorship, grounded within the mentor's socioracial awareness

and consciousness, and willingness to discuss the unique experiences of BIPOC students, can also be helpful to support the interpersonal and professional development of BIPOC graduate students (Louis et al., 2018). Identity-incongruent mentoring relationships may offer alternative perspectives and access to information, professional opportunities (i.e., sponsorships), and a deeper sense of belonging, to reduce experience feelings of otherness for BIPOC doctoral students (Dahlvig, 2010; Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Angel, 2017).

Comparatively, identity-congruent mentor relationships offer Black women doctoral students interpersonal, career, and navigational preparation for successful matriculation through predominately White academic spaces (i.e., sponsorship, supporting rigorous multicultural research; Behar-Horenstein et l., 2012; Bryant et al., 2016; Dahlvig, 2010; Zambrana et al., 2015). Through identity- or cultural-congruent mentor relationships, Black women doctoral students may become aware of challenges faculty navigate in attending to professional responsibilities, while simultaneously dealing with negative race and gender based experiences within academe (e.g., intelligence/academic status questioned by students, microaggressions, devaluation of research agenda; Griffin, 2013). Thus, in this study we aim to further understand how teaching-specific mentor relationships among Black women faculty-intended students may cultivate interpersonal, navigational, and professional skills that support teaching practices within counselor education and psychology programs.

Method

To achieve the specific goals of this study, we employed collaborative autoethnography (CAE) as our method. Autoethnographies offer researchers the opportunity to reflect on and analyze their personal narratives as data points through a structured social and cultural lens as researcher-participants. CAE as a process offers researchers the opportunity to collectively examine individual

stories and experiences to understand a shared phenomenon (Chang et al., 2013). CAE as a methodology does not contain a specific order or method of data collection; rather, there are general tenets presented in this methodology (i.e., reflection on autobiographical experiences, group questions and critique, iterative discussion). Consistent with previously published scholarship, we utilized CAE because it offered us intimate and familiar access to our data (i.e., our individual autobiographies of teaching-specific mentorship). As researcher-participants, this method also allowed us to embrace a process of sharing, critiquing, and reflecting on our engagement in teaching mentorships through our contextual experiences as Black women within a predominantly White institution (Chang, 2013; Chang et al., 2013; Lapadat, 2017; Lapadat et al., 2010). Moreover, CAE is a methodological approach that aligns well with our interpretive frameworks of Black feminist thought (BFT; Collins, 2000) and endarkened feminist epistemology (EFE; Dillard, 2000).

Briefly, BFT is a critical social theory birthed from the observations, lived experiences, resistance, and standpoint of Black women in the United States. This theory provides a standpoint to better understand the role of history, social and cultural factors, and narration of Black women's lived reality (Collins, 2000). BFT also provides a common language to examine how other social identities such as class, nationality, and sexual identity inform experiences of dominance, oppression, and perspective within society and academe (Evans-Winters, 2019). We also relied on EFE, a concept established by Dillard (2000), to further contextualize our narratives. EFE deepened the BFT interpretive lens by charging us as Black women feminist scholars to be responsible, accountable, and intentional with embodying an endarkened epistemology as we collected, interpreted, and reported our findings (Dillard, 2000, 2012). EFE provided us license to take the blueprint of African ancestral knowledge and stories to produce scholarship of liberation and transformation for Black women scholars in counseling. As discussed later, African concepts such as Sankofa (which translates to *go back and*

get it) and Ubuntu (a concept that reflects interconnectedness and humanity to others) are called upon as a part of the CAE narratives. Utilizing CAE while simultaneously employing Black scholarly focused frameworks is the first of its kind within the counselor education literature. Our approach to this study offers a unique contribution to the field, in terms of findings relevant for Black women counselor educators and counselor education doctoral students, as well as more broadly in terms of the methodologies used to examine the narratives describing phenomena relevant to advancing the social justice scholarship in counseling.

Procedure

Participants received an invitation from their mentor (the third author, Dr. Chapman-Hilliard) to participate in a research group focused on identifying core elements of teaching mentorships and teaching social justice-based courses among faculty-intended Black women in psychology and counseling. Each participant was invited to participate based on the following criteria: (a) prior teaching mentorship relationship with Dr. Chapman-Hilliard for at least one full semester; (b) stated interest in academic teaching within counselor education or psychology field; and (c) self-identifying as a Black woman preparing to enter or having entered the academe. Researcher-participants all self-identified as Black women. At the time of data collection, the researcher-participants included a second-year doctoral student, a tenure-track faculty member, and a full-time teaching faculty member, all at predominately White research universities. This project also included narratives from the participants' shared mentor, a tenured faculty member. With researcher-participants identified, the group developed a list of questions as a collective to help each participant reflect on their respective journeys of the teaching mentorship experience. Some of the reflection questions included: *How did the mentorship relationship begin? What distinguishes this particular mentoring relationship from others you have engaged in previously? What strategies did*

your mentor use to help you prepare for life in the academe as a Black woman?

Data Collection and Analysis

The initial step for our collaborative autoethnography involved the team cocreating reflection questions to help prompt each researcher-participant to deeply reflect and record their experience within the teaching mentorship as it related to their professional development and socialization in the mentee or mentor role. After the questions were developed, research participants responded and shared written reflections to be discussed orally during biweekly virtual Zoom reflection meetings. These meetings offered opportunities for members to question, challenge, and engage in deep reflection for each of the responses. Each Zoom meeting was recorded with the consent of all researcher-participants to be used as data for this CAE, along with artifacts (e.g., emails, recommendation letters) and written reflections.

Data analysis was informed by both traditional suggestions for working with the autoethnography methodology, specifically thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and our interpretive frameworks of BFT (Collins, 2000) and EFE (Dillard, 2000). Themes in the data were identified based on our research purpose. During the interpretation of data, participant-researchers were attentive to the presence of cultural themes. In alignment with our interpretive lenses of BFT and EFE, Black cultural praxis of connecting (e.g., laughing, emotionality, honoring other elders) and relating (e.g., trading stories, exclaiming agreement; Cooper et al., 2017; hooks, 2014) were significant in the development of our themes. Further, we examined how cultural-congruent mentorship, as Black women, is birthed within the context of the African transnational journey of our ancestors (i.e., survival through fictive kinships) and thus acknowledge the necessity of relationships in shared communal struggle for Black sustainability within academic settings.

Findings

From the data sources collected for this autoethnography, we identified and described three themes that embody the essence and influence of teaching mentorships among the Black women in this study. The themes include: (a) teaching mentorship informing social justice teaching praxis; (b) decolonization and social justice embodiment through mentorship relationship; and (c) community extension of responsibility within Black women mentorship relationships. These themes are described in the following sections.

Teaching Mentorship Informing Social Justice Teaching Praxis

The theme *teaching mentorship informing social justice teaching praxis* characterized mentees discussing how the teaching mentorship provided opportunities to observe the behind the scenes activities of course preparation for multiculturalism and social justice advocacy in counseling courses, including but not limited to syllabus construction, connecting teaching andragogy to curricular decisions, management of critical class discussions, and modeling commitment to engaging in social advocacy within counseling institution. The teaching mentorship became an active training and learning environment where we were challenged to try new skills (e.g., facilitating course discussions, integrating consciousness-raising activities), while also obtaining comprehensive feedback and support in how we align our teaching style and decisions with who we are as Black women.

Brean'a and Shawntell shared how this mentorship experience taught them the value of being attentive to intention, not only within their mentoring relationship, but as future Black counselor education and psychology faculty. Brean'a shares:

> I learned from Dr. Chapman-Hilliard that people will question what you are doing and because you care about how your actions will impact students, you should have an intentional answer

behind your decisions …. Most of the conversations we had were around teaching, like content, classroom dynamics, syllabus construction, and class preparedness — especially because the first year that I TA'ed, I — TA'ed in other classes but it wasn't like a teaching me how to be an instructor or how to think about how to approach students. I'm usually good about expressing areas of growth that I need to work on, but despite sharing that with other faculty, they would just say, "go ahead and do it" or "I don't mind you doing it," but what I needed was a facilitative process and that's what Dr. Chapman-Hilliard provided. She shared the behind the scenes of teaching intentionally to help me make decisions about how I would teach (the method, activities, assignments, evaluation, approach, etc.).

Additionally, the consistent presence of the teaching mentor fostered commitment to a mutually engaging and reciprocal professional mentorship relationship, while simultaneously modeling how interpersonal commitment and relationships are tools to resist barriers and challenges within academe. Raven shares:

A lesson I learned from my relationship with Dr. CH is that nobody will have your back, like Black women will have your back. Towards the end of my doctoral program, life went into shambles. Not even academic stuff, literally my day-to-day life of trying to pay bills and survive … like it was in shambles. And I needed help and didn't know how to ask for it. Dr. Chapman-Hilliard tapped into her resources … so that I could get what I needed to get. And I know no one else would have done that for me but another Black woman. And I'm really, really grateful for that and feel inspired to pay it forward for the Black girls [and women] coming up behind me.

Raven spoke to the additional, and often invisible, stressors Black women in graduate programs often shoulder while working to complete the difficult programmatic milestones. Teaching mentorships acted as a facilitator to persist within doctoral programs and fostered the future praxis of

teaching to address inequities that impact students' matriculation. Brean'a described the following:

As you were sharing Raven, something that came up for me and Shawntell was the role of intentionality and spirituality in the teaching mentorship relationship. It's intentional because the whole point was for us to learn how to do teaching … not just how to put a syllabus together or put a unit together but preparing us for a future in teaching counseling concepts as Black women in programs grounded in social justice … this relationship got us ready and prepared us through lessons, conversations, storytelling and our personal experiences.

Decolonization and Social Justice Embodiment Through Mentorship Relationship

The theme *decolonization and social justice embodiment through mentorship relationship* describes the quality of the mentorship relationship and how it is significant in social justice praxis. Participant-researchers characterized this teaching mentorship as a communal setting as Black women that also embodied freedom, agency, and validation for both the mentor and the mentee. Participant-researchers shared how both the relationship and physical space (i.e., Dr. Chapman-Hilliard's office) countered traditional Western praxis of mentorship relationships as being hierarchal, distant, and predominantly evaluative and one-sided. In describing their relationship, mentees shared the meaning of the brave and safe space offered by the teaching mentorship relationship that allowed for their full humanity to be realized and cared for within this context, which translated to confidence as co-instructors.

Raven described how the relationship provided by Dr. Chapman-Hilliard offered a safe landing space in higher education, where the expectation for Black women is to be strong, resilient, and assimilative to their white counterparts:

I never had a mentor like [her] … she allows me to cry and be overwhelmed and then she ushers me out of it, into action, to address my concerns

…. I need to know it's okay to feel how I feel and to be reminded that I have to get my work done. I appreciate her duality in that way and I also appreciate how she allows me to be vulnerable in ways that other mentors, who I love and respect a lot, have not done so.

Both Raven and Shawntell recounted experiences where Dr. Chapman-Hilliard honored their person and unbridled potential while also helping them challenge the very institutions they hoped to matriculate through the use of resistant strategies. Raven shares:

When I was preparing for my first campus visit for a faculty interview and Dr. Chapman-Hilliard served as my audience for that presentation [laughs], she was very strong and strict … ripped my presentation into shreds and [I] wanted to fix everything. And she was like absolutely not, just go back up and do it. [I said,] "You're not going to let me get myself together?" And she said, "No, because you know it and this is your anxiety talking." … As I was going through my findings, I got emotional. You know? Cuz when you are studying Black girls on the African continent and you know that was the most beautiful experience I ever had. She let me get through my tears and she said you need to practice your findings — practice speaking it until you feel it in your belly but it doesn't show on your face …. I did it!

Shawntell had a similar experience with Raven, where Dr. Chapman-Hilliard helped her realize that there was room in academe for how she showed up as her authentic self within the classroom and program. Raven shared:

I don't have to pretend to be someone that I am not. [Shawntell]: Exactly! [Raven]: I get to be me, I get to be anxious, vulnerable and a crybaby in certain spaces that I know are safe for me. It doesn't mean I'm lesser and it doesn't say anything negative about my abilities or my competence …. I get to be a person and a scholar. That's been important to know and for her to model the same. In discussing her relational approach to mentorship, Dr. Chapman-

Hilliard shares her mentorship experiences and how she passed on the value and practice of being your authentic self as a counter to the messages and expectations for academic institutions. I go back to the person that … introduced me to counseling psychology [a Black woman mentor at my undergraduate institution]…. One of the things that [she] did for me the most is that she was just herself. And I started to realize, I couldn't name it then — but I can certainly name it now, that she really modeled and demonstrated that it is okay to be yourself in the fullness of your Blackness in the academe and recognizing the time when negotiating that fullness may look differently for the survival of what it means to be in the academe. She is the reason I knew the name [of my forever amazing doctoral advisor and mentor], and [my doctoral advisor] does not identify as a Black woman, he is the same in the sense complete, full, and never any shame about [being Black].

Mentees discussed that the teaching mentorship relationship became a site for possibilities and vulnerability regarding how to show up in academic spaces. Additionally, the teaching mentorship signified how change and empowerment can function within and through relationships, despite institutional challenges.

Community Extension of Responsibility

The African word Sankofa (which translates to *go back and get it*, referring to getting knowledge from the past and bringing it into the present) characterizes this theme of *community extension of responsibility*. In reflecting on the meaning and experiences of this teaching mentorship, participant-researchers reflected on the lessons and values gained from the relationship and how it had been passed and paid forward, but also planted back into spaces and relationships they value. Additionally, the role of Ubuntu (which translates to "I am because we are") is also closely aligned with this theme. The concepts of common humanity, shared responsibility, and communal care were depicted in the role of kinship and commitment to and among

one another, thus, supporting the sustainability and wellness of Black women on the path from doctoral students to teaching and research faculty.

Dr. Chapman-Hilliard discussed how Ubuntu and Sankofa are embodied within her relational approach to teaching mentorship with Black women in particular:

Kinship certainly comes to mind as well as spirituality and connectedness to experiences and people beyond the self. Attending to Black history has always been an important part of mentorship in the sense that this history informs my understanding of how Black community members give to each other to support collective progress. I am reminded of the African proverb, *I am because we are* and because we are therefore I am. Black community members also "show up" and this aspect of community is also significant; I by no means have even a fraction of the "answers" or some magic teaching wand but I believe in showing up, that's what my ancestors taught me and that's how I am even engaging in [this work as a psychologist] now, because folx showed up.

Dr. Chapman-Hilliard also discussed how these values inform a sense of responsibility for the professional and personal development of Black women as a result of shared narratives:

I think about [this responsibility] as a precious positioning to mentor other Black women. It means a lot and it's not a responsibility that I can take lightly … there is a community extension of responsibility that feels almost like a shared fate.

While as a mentor Dr. Chapman-Hilliard said she felt an innate sense of responsibility within her role as a mentor, mentees discussed how they experienced a reciprocal responsibility in caring for and supporting Dr. Chapman-Hilliard as part of their teaching mentorship. Raven shared how her mutual responsibility manifested in how she prepared and represented herself within the relationship and within teaching settings:

I feel a sense of reciprocity [and] I feel responsibility for Dr. Chapman-Hilliard …

especially when I was TA-ing with her, I felt a responsibility to do my part. I felt a responsibility to show up my best, even on days when it was really hard to do that. I felt a responsibility to not make her job any more difficult than it already is as a Black woman in the academe. And both of us being Black women, I was very cognizant and conscious of that, every time I entered the classroom, when I was engaging with students …. I definitely felt and still feel a responsibility to do her name justice, with me being tied to her means something and I have to protect that …. And not in a bad way, I felt a sense of responsibility and reciprocity, when I knew that there was a connection — when people connected me to her, because I was her TA. I had a responsibility to do my best; to put out my best; to show up for students; to implement the things she was actively teaching me.

Shawntell discussed the mutual ethic of care demanded by mentees in recognition of the time, labor, energy, and investment provided to Black mentees who are aiming to be successful students and future faculty:

Dr. Chapman-Hilliard has our back in a way that no other faculty has. The least or bare minimum I can do is have her back as well …. I'm super protective because I [recognize her] bandwidth and she wants to do a lot, the same way we have a bandwidth and we want to do a lot. And [she is] always emphasizing what radical self-care looks like for Black women and so the same reminders [she] gives us, we have to remind her.

Brean'a discussed how this responsibility is not only born out of the cultural collective praxis of honoring elders who take you under their guidance, and reciprocating, but there is the factor of preservation and retention of both the presence of and well-being for Black faculty as well. The knowledge that faculty, particularly junior faculty, often experience the imposition of increased labor and service (e.g., sponsorship and mentorship of BIPOC students, serving on diversity committees, teaching multicultural courses) influenced the sense

of responsibility she felt toward her mentor (Patton & Harper, 2003; Pérez & Carney, 2018).

Discussion

This collaborative autoethnography qualitatively explored the individual and collective narratives of teaching mentor relationships from the point of view of three Black women mentees and their teaching mentor. These narratives and reflections revealed that teaching mentorships that are identity and culturally informed provide significant support for meaningful thriving within doctoral counselor education and psychology programs among Black women seeking faculty positions. Themes from this study, which included *teaching mentorship informing social justice teaching praxis*, *decolonization, and social justice embodiment through mentorship relationship,* and *community extension of responsibility*, aligned with previous studies describing professional mentorships between doctoral students and faculty (Curtin et al., 2016; Inman, 2020; Troisi et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2018). Acknowledging the faculty channel for Black women in higher education, all three themes illuminated the unique role of Black women faculty working with Black women doctoral students in support of their career goals, socializations, and well-being into their academic careers (Grant & Ghee, 2015; Grant & Simmons, 2008; Kelly et al., 2017). The theme of *teaching mentorships informing social justice teaching praxis* emphasized that in addition to learning the technical skills required for faculty instruction, the learning environment within the teaching mentorship nurtured Black women teaching mentees' intellect and scholarly skills to resist and acknowledge traditional educational andragogy (i.e., banking system of education; Freire, 1972; hooks, 1994).

Our theme of *decolonization and social justice embodiment through mentorship relationships* contributes to literature supporting the importance of identity-congruent mentor–mentee professional relationships as socializing mechanisms to prepare for the demands of early career faculty life, while

also offering space for Black women to foster intimacy, kinship, support, and safety (Fries-Britt & Kelly, 2005; Patton & Harper, 2003). As highlighted in this theme, mentorship relationships can be a communal space to facilitate conversations related to marginalized identities and sociopolitical climate issues within higher education. Additionally, the community cultivated by culturally-congruent teaching mentorships aligns with the values and praxis of womanism (Philips, 2006) that embodies social transformation through and within relationships, dialogue, mothering, and mutual support within all spaces. The fostering of community through the cultural dynamics of teaching mentorship to address institutional barriers and inequities experienced by Black women doctoral students filtered into relationships (and course work) within the counseling and psychology classes. Much like EFE centers culturally authentic ways of knowing and interconnectedness among Black women (Dillard, 2000), our findings indicate that Black faculty who center Black cultural knowledge or ways of knowing, meaningful relationships, and holistic professional socialization act as possibility models for Black women doctoral students who rarely see themselves represented in faculty positions (Hannon et al., 2019; Haynes et al., 2018; Patton & Harper, 2003; Rasheem et al., 2018). This theme further acknowledges that while recruitment and enrollment of Black women in higher institutions is steadily climbing, institutional infrastructures necessary to retain Black women are lacking, which makes mentorship essential to Black women persisting through their programs (Bryant et al., 2016; Chan et al., 2015).

The theme of *community extension of responsibility* adds to mentorship scholarship highlighting the notion of reciprocity between mentees and mentors. Consistent with BFT and EFE, this theme debunks the myth and expectation that mentorship relationships are hierarchical and one-directional. Instead this theme ushers in collectivistic values of Black cultural traditions (e.g., other mothering, ethic of care, interconnectedness). The theme *community extension of responsibility* adds to literature about helping to prepare future faculty to handle teaching

responsibilities associated with their jobs and further illustrates that teaching mentorships are training opportunities to learn how to embody social justice values in teaching. Themes in this study challenge the notion of mentorship being only an individual-level intervention for professional socialization of doctoral students; themes in this study demonstrate the teaching mentor relationship as a transformative enactment and application opportunity to inform future social justice focused andragogy as faculty in counseling programs.

Limitations

This study has potential limitations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and participants working and attending different universities during the study, participant researchers had to rely on Zoom meeting and shared Google documentation for data collection (i.e., reflection questions/prompts, critical discussion, story sharing), which may have limited the time and sharing of story details. Additionally, while most of the conversations were done collectively and synchronously, some reflections for an author had to be done through recordings, as a result of lack of availability due to academic faculty duties.

Recommendations and Implications for Teaching Mentorship Practice With Black Women

As more Black women seek to attain doctoral-level education in counselor education and subsequently enter academe to pursue instructional roles that require competence in social justice oriented teaching, it is increasingly important to identify processes and mechanisms that support their success. For example, engaging in "real talk" with teaching mentees about potential challenges of implementing social justice andragogy is one strategy that may be supportive for this population. For Black women mentees, the teaching mentorship relationship can serve as a space to have important dialogue centered on their identity as a Black woman (as well as other identities, e.g., queer, non-binary, disabled) within academe. These kinds of

conversations have implications for cultivating a culture of humility and authenticity among trainees and faculty, particularly in relation to how social identities influence learning environments. Another manner of fostering Black women instructors' success is to develop teaching mentee groups that serve as a built-in learning and accountability community. This opportunity can help sustain social justice andragogical practice through engagement with other people and offer a space to explore how social identities influence the classroom context. Finally, it is necessary to teach future Black women faculty about teaching social justice topics. For example, modeling how to identify and incorporate readings authored by minoritized scholars as a core component of social justice andragogy, and providing opportunities to challenge dominant narratives of knowledge production. Intentional practice of social justice teaching strategies has important implications for curriculum development and, more broadly, counseling programs' commitment to social justice beyond vision statements by demonstrating social justice values throughout the curriculum and other aspects of counseling training programs.

Conclusion

The narratives offered in this study provide insight into the necessity of *showing up* as it relates to influencing social justice praxis through teaching specific mentor relationships with Black women doctoral students. It is important to recognize the impact of the mentor relationship, acknowledging that what occurs in this relationship may not only influence what one teaches, but it may also influence how one engages with the practice of teaching social justice–related content. For Black women, having authentic discussions about their identities can be invaluable in the teaching mentorship relationship — promoting confidence, increasing situational awareness, and fostering teaching skills to facilitate difficult dialogues in a manner that attends to the entire learning community. Indeed, teaching mentorships equip Black women trainees with tools to show up as

architects for the next generation of culturally humble and social justice-oriented helping professionals, values central to practice and scholarship in counselor education.

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[1] The authors utilize the term *channel* in opposition to the traditional pipeline metaphor to be sensitive to the significance of pipelines to indigenous and native populations in this country.

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