

---

7-7-2021

## And Still I Rise: Protective Factors for Black Counseling Psychology Doctoral Students from Predominantly White Institutions

Jessica L. Elliott  
Seton Hall University, [jessica.elliott@student.shu.edu](mailto:jessica.elliott@student.shu.edu)

Jason D. Reynolds  
University of San Francisco, [jreynolds6@usfca.edu](mailto:jreynolds6@usfca.edu)

Minsun Lee  
Seton Hall University, [minsun.lee@shu.edu](mailto:minsun.lee@shu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>

 Part of the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Social Statistics Commons](#)

---

### Recommended APA Citation

Elliott, J. L., Reynolds, J. D., & Lee, M. (2021). And Still I Rise: Protective Factors for Black Counseling Psychology Doctoral Students from Predominantly White Institutions. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(7), 2206-2225. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4771>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

---



## And Still I Rise: Protective Factors for Black Counseling Psychology Doctoral Students from Predominantly White Institutions

### Abstract

In this study, we sought to understand which protective factors Black doctoral students from predominantly White institutions (PWI) utilized to persist in their counseling psychology doctoral programs. Past research has examined the potential obstacles these students encounter and the importance of the mentor relationship in the doctoral process. In this study, we sought to explore the factors that motivate Black doctoral students to complete their respective programs, as well as important features in their relationship with their advisor. There were four males and three females with ages ranging from 22 – 41 ( $M = 27.57$  and  $SD = 6.63$ ) from various counseling psychology programs throughout the country. Within the constructivist-interpretivist research paradigm, interviews were conducted via Skype and analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The study's findings illuminate important factors that are significant in creating diverse and inclusive educational environments that will allow for more marginalized groups to contribute to the field of psychology at the doctoral level.

### Keywords

counseling psychology, training, Black students, education, interpretative phenomenological analysis

### Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Kalya Castillo, MEd for all of her help and efforts with this study.

# **And Still I Rise: Protective Factors for Black Counseling Psychology Doctoral Students from Predominantly White Institutions**

Jessica L. Elliott

Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, USA

Jason D. Reynolds (Taewon Choi)

University of San Francisco, California, USA

Minsun Lee

Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, USA

---

In this study, we sought to understand which protective factors Black doctoral students from predominantly White institutions (PWI) utilized to persist in their counseling psychology doctoral programs. Past research has examined the potential obstacles these students encounter and the importance of the mentor relationship in the doctoral process. In this study, we sought to explore the factors that motivate Black doctoral students to complete their respective programs, as well as important features in their relationship with their advisor. There were four males and three females with ages ranging from 22 – 41 ( $M = 27.57$  and  $SD = 6.63$ ) from various counseling psychology programs throughout the country. Within the constructivist-interpretivist research paradigm, interviews were conducted via Skype and analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The study's findings illuminate important factors that are significant in creating diverse and inclusive educational environments that will allow for more marginalized groups to contribute to the field of psychology at the doctoral level.

*Keywords:* counseling psychology, training, Black students, education, interpretative phenomenological analysis

---

## **Introduction**

There were approximately 2.9 million American students enrolled in post-baccalaureate degree programs in 2015, of which only 364,000 (12.6%) identified as Black (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Although enrollment rates among Black graduate students have increased by 99 percent (181,000 to 362,000 students between 2000 to 2010), Black students continue to be a minority within the field. In the field of psychology, data obtained from both the 2004-2005 and 2014-2015 academic years indicated there was an increase in enrollment of almost all racial or ethnic groups throughout the ten-year period, with an observed increase of 14% in the African American/Black student population (Lin et al., 2017). When examining the racial demographic of both master's level and doctoral level students, African American/Black students represented 11.9% of students who obtain graduate degrees in psychology. However, African American/Black students represented only 6.1% of students who obtain doctoral

degrees in Psychology<sup>1</sup> (Lin et al., 2017). While the rate at which African American/Black students are pursuing graduate degrees in psychology is increasing, the number of students continuing their education to obtain a doctoral degree remains lower than their peers obtaining master's degrees. With these statistics in mind, we sought to examine protective factors that allow for Black doctoral students to persevere throughout their educational path.

The literature focused on Black graduate student experiences is limited. Extant research has found that Black graduate students reported feeling that their graduate experience was significantly different from their White counterparts. Unique concerns for Black graduate students include potential stereotype threat (Taylor & Soto Antony, 2000), feelings of isolation, invisibility, disconnection to campus life and possible racial discrimination from peers and faculty (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009). McClain et al. (2016) have termed this cluster of concerns as Minority Status Stress. Minority status stress (MSS) has been suggested to be more prevalent in Black college students who attend predominately White institutions. Along with MSS, Black college students are also at risk of struggling with the "imposter phenomenon," a feeling that they are not worthy of being in their academic settings (McClain et al., 2016). Both MSS and IP have been linked with negative outcomes on Black college students' sense of worth, the value they add to the campus and the level of entitlement they feel to be in the college setting (McClain et al., 2016). Gildersleeve et al. (2011) discussed how these feelings of isolation and possible instances of racial or ethnic discrimination can lead to doctoral students of color questioning their worth or ability while in their programs, feeling they must censor themselves in various educational settings or perhaps subduing their scholarly interests to appease mainstream academia.

Regardless of race, graduate students find themselves dealing with a variety of stressors, including juggling multiple responsibilities, managing various deadlines, and learning how to appropriately cope with stress (Johnson et al., 2008). Brill et al. (2014) explored factors that serve as barriers or protective factors to retention rates across doctoral programs. The authors found that the factors included: confusion concerning program requirements and length of program, the nature and design of doctoral programs and various forms of mentoring. A survey from 2016 reported 13 percent of graduate students were treated for depression, 17 percent were treated for anxiety and nearly one third of the participants reported feeling depressed in a way that impacted their functioning at least once over the past academic year (Schmidt, 2016). Graduate students who reported facing racial discrimination were often twice as likely to show signs of depression and three times as likely to show signs of anxiety (Johnson et al., 2008).

When considering the experiences Black graduate students potentially endure, it is concerning that mental health stigma and self-concealment continues to hinder Black college students from seeking out professional psychological services (Masuda et al., 2012).

As with all research that focuses on the experiences of marginalized communities, the experience of Black doctoral students is not monolithic. For example, literature has examined the unique experience of being a Black female graduate student where individuals may face racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination on their path to the doctorate (Jones et al., 2013; Robinson, 2013). While a few recent studies have explored the intersectionality of doctoral students with multiple marginalized identities (Jones et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2013; Remaker et al., 2021; Robinson, 2013), further intersectional research is needed. Rasheem et al. (2018) focused on the experiences of Black female doctoral students across multiple academic disciplines. Their findings highlighted the importance of organic mentoring relationships and having a mentor with similar lived experiences at the intersection of race and gender. The authors explored how these factors positively impacted the personal growth of

---

<sup>1</sup> This statistic includes those pursuing a Ph.D. as well as a Psy.D. degree.

students within the program and provided them with access and opportunities to enhance their careers (Rasheem et al., 2018).

### **Research on Faculty Support**

Faculty support has been shown to increase students' academic persistence across fields of study (Felder et al., 2014). Studies that have examined the role of mentoring in doctoral education (Felder, 2010; Gasman et al., 2004; Hollingsworth & Fassinger, 2002) have observed successful mentoring practices often help to take away the complexities associated with navigating academia. Hollingsworth and Fassinger (2002) sought to examine the role of faculty mentors in the research training of counseling psychology doctoral students. While their findings were like previous studies supporting the importance of a student's research self-efficacy and past research attitudes, they also found that the research training environment and mentoring experiences were significant in students' level of research productivity.

The role of mentorship for students of color is particularly important given the likelihood that students of color will feel social, cultural, and intellectual isolation on their college campuses and perhaps in their respective departments (Charleston et al., 2014; Gay, 2004; Henfield et al., 2013). Research focused on the experiences of doctoral students of color across different fields of psychology (Maton et al., 2011) found the mentor relationship was observed to be the strongest predictor of satisfaction. Johnson-Bailey et al. (2009) found former Black graduate students who completed their programs reported feeling the need to have a more formal relationship with their professors or advisors due to covert and overt examples of discrimination. In addition, Black graduate students felt a sense of isolation and disconnect from their programs and departments. These graduates reported feeling that their White peers had more opportunities to reap the benefits of informal networking with their professors. Given the paucity of faculty members of color in academia and psychology specifically (22% faculty of color in psychology in 2015; American Psychological Association, 2019), the need for culturally competent cross-racial mentorship is essential. Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) suggested guidelines that faculty members could use when providing cross-racial mentoring and advisement, including mentors' awareness of the ways racial/cultural differences could impact the mentoring relationship and students' experiences in the program.

While there is literature that discusses models of mentoring across disciplines (Buell, 2004; Young et al., 2005), too few models take into consideration the multicultural, ecological, and relational factors of mentoring related to students of color in Psychology doctoral programs (Chan et al., 2015). Chan et al.'s (2015) model outlined the multiple contextual factors (society/culture, professional field, university and family/community) are constantly interconnected in a mentoring relationship between a mentor and protégé. The authors highlighted that while the mentor can provide certain dimensions of advising and mentorship to the protégé (such as career and personal support, a trusting relationship and institutional support), the relationship is a reciprocal one in which both parties benefit from the interactions.

### **Importance and Impact of Diversity on College Campuses**

A potential protective factor for Black graduate students is the creation of racially diverse and inclusive campuses. Museus et al. (2016) discussed factors on college campuses that enhance the sense of belonging for students of color, which in turn can lead to greater academic success and ultimately higher graduation rates. The authors highlighted the importance of cultural relevance and cultural responsiveness on campuses. Another factor that could positively impact the enrollment and retention rates of students of color is the presence of faculty of color. Faculty or administrators of color often have the task of providing these

students with a sense of belonging on campus, as well as guidance on how to navigate their racialized experiences (Harper, 2013). Literature across different academic fields (Jones et al., 2013; Moore & Toliver, 2010) found the shared racial experiences of Black professors and Black students can result in students having positive role models on campus and social support throughout their educational journey; this support can be critical for their degree completion. Along with the presence of diverse faculty having a positive impact on students of color socialization to campus, research amongst undergraduate students also found that overall graduation rates for underrepresented minority students were positively correlated with an increase in diversity amongst faculty members (Stout et al., 2018). Yet, faculty of color make up only 26% of full-time instructional staff with faculty status in the United States across all disciplines (Office of Planning Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016).

While research has examined the experiences of students from marginalized backgrounds (Fountaine, 2012; Jones et al., 2013; Mackey & Shannon, 2014; Maton et al., 2011; Rasheem et al., 2018), these studies utilized participants across multiple disciplines and may not be applicable to doctoral students in a specific discipline. In this present study, we sought to explore the lived experiences of Black doctoral students in counseling psychology programs to determine if their experiences overlap with those seen in published literature. We purposely sought out participants from predominantly White institutions to further examine the potential influence that campus and cohort demographics would have on the participant's experiences in their programs. In this study, we sought to explore whether the participants developed protective factors, due to being on a predominantly White campus, and to better understand how the makeup of the cohort members could affect participants' experiences. While some research (Chen et al., 2014) found that having a diverse and supportive campus environment that provides academic and social supports promotes satisfaction amongst Black students at both PWIs and HBCUs, other research (Reeder & Schmitt, 2013) has found that HBCUs provide their students with more nuanced interpersonal support (e.g., higher quality interactions with faculty members and more encouragement from faculty and staff) that can have an impact on students' academic motivation and judgment. With these studies in mind, we aimed to better understand the experiences of Black doctoral students at PWIs.

Considering the emphasis placed on diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice in counseling psychology (Scheel et al., 2018), it would be important to observe if the experiences of these students vary from the experiences of other doctoral students in other specialty areas of psychology or across other academic disciplines. It should also be considered that counseling psychology doctoral programs often train their graduates to enter the field of psychology in a wide variety of positions, such as researcher, clinician, or consultant. These results may provide insight to how Black doctoral students experience the implementation of diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice within their program's curriculum, cohort selections, and mentoring relationships. These findings may elucidate factors that have helped retain and support Black doctoral students while also providing feedback for further improvement.

The present study focused on the potential protective factors that lead to Black doctoral students continuing their education in their respective counseling psychology doctoral programs. This research study also uncovered important factors in the mentor relationship that aided in student success. While the constructs are unique, the terms "advisor" and "mentor" are often used interchangeably throughout the study.

This study focused on two research questions:

1. What do Black graduate students identify as factors that lead to their enrollment and persistence in predominantly White graduate programs in counseling psychology?

2. What do Black graduate students need from mentors and their programs in order to succeed?

### **Researchers' Backgrounds, Positionality, and Biases**

This study utilized the constructivist-Interpretivist research paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005). The constructivist-interpretivist research paradigm encourages researchers to examine their own societal and cultural positionalities and how these may interact with the research topic at hand. An auditor and the second and third authors worked with the first author to review study methods, results, and to review potential biases.

The first author is a 29-year-old heterosexual, cisgender female of African American and Nicaraguan heritage. At the time of the study, she was in her third year of doctoral study in counseling psychology at a private university in New Jersey. The first author is interested in conducting research on the lived experiences of those within the African Diaspora. During her master's program she led a study that focused on Black Male college retention rates and the factors that encouraged or hindered their pursuit of a college education.

The second author is a 37-year-old heterosexual, Korean American, transracially adopted, cisgender male. He is an Assistant Professor of counseling psychology at a private university in California. He has previous research experience on identity, transracial adoption, names, and mentorship. The third author is a heterosexual, Korean American, cisgender female, who is an assistant professor in a counseling psychology program. She researches bicultural identity and the intersections of gender, race, and culture. She has previous experience supervising student research on Black Americans' racial identity, critical consciousness, and sociopolitical action.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited exclusively from counseling psychology doctoral programs. Participants had to self-identify racially as "Black," currently be enrolled in a counseling psychology doctoral program and be in a predominantly White cohort where there were more White cohort members than members of color. The sample consisted of seven individuals from various geographic locations across the United States including the Southeast, Northeast, and Midwestern regions. There were four males and three females with ages ranging from 22 – 41 ( $M = 27.57$  and  $SD = 6.63$ ). Of the seven participants, one of the participants was from a private university and six participants were from public universities within the United States. Throughout the paper, the names of the participants were changed in order to protect the identities of the participants.

### **Paradigm and Research Design**

In this study, we operated from a Constructivist-Interpretivist research paradigm and explored the realities of the participants while also attempting to gain an understanding and reflecting on how participants make meaning from their lived experiences (Ponterotto, 2005). We used a semi-structured interview protocol, placing the interaction, and conversation between the first author and participant at the center of the study (Ponterotto, 2005). This research design utilized Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA attempts to offer a detailed account of a very particular and nuanced experience of a particular population (Smith et al., 2012). IPA compares the similarities and differences of the research participants and

determines if there are patterns in the experiences. The goal of IPA is to understand the experiences of the participants and how they make sense of their personal world. Unlike other methods of qualitative study that seek to produce a statement or theory regarding the research study, IPA attempts to seek out a detailed exploration of the population's worldview.

## **Procedure**

This research study received approval from Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board prior to conducting the study. Participants were recruited through emails sent to training directors of counseling psychology doctoral programs across the United States. These emails included the letter of solicitation, as well as a brief explanation of the study. If interested, students were encouraged to email the first author and were then sent additional paperwork (demographic questionnaire) to ensure participants met inclusion criteria as well as the informed consent for the study. Interested participants needed to complete the demographic questionnaire, which indicated that they self-identified as Black and confirmed that they were members of a cohort that was predominantly White. Within this demographic questionnaire, they were also asked about the racial background of their advisor.

Once all the interviews were completed, the first author and an additional auditor transcribed each interview. Once the interviews were transcribed, interviews were analyzed, and initial codes were created. The first author and the additional auditor analyzed and coded the transcripts utilizing close, line-by-line analysis of the experiences of each participant, identifying emergent patterns within these transcripts and across the multiple transcripts (Smith et al., 2012). The first author and additional auditor explored connections across the emergent themes and used abstraction and subsumption in order to develop "super-ordinate status" themes that would tie together related themes (Smith et al., 2012). Themes seen within the transcripts were examined for their relevance for answering the research questions and quotes that fit the respective themes were chosen to exemplify the points made. Emergent themes were identified as recurrent when the themes were seen across at least three different participants. Data saturation was determined to be met by the first author when there appeared to be no additional themes or information related to the research questions being discussed in the participant interviews (Guest et al., 2006). The first author and additional auditor utilized Microsoft Word during this process and highlighted the excerpts from the transcripts that exemplified the emergent themes seen within and across the transcripts.

## **Results**

Regarding the first research question, three super-ordinate or main themes appeared within the transcripts: Use of social supports outside of program or department, actively utilizing self-care techniques, self-motivating factors that led to persistence and impact of cohort on experience in program.

### **Utilizing Social Supports Outside of Program or Department**

This overarching theme focuses on students' use of social supports in order to persevere throughout their program. This super-ordinate theme includes the themes of students' reports of having social supports outside of the program or department and utilizing the social support of their family members. Students who reported feeling unsupported within their respective program or department reported utilizing social supports they found in other academic settings on campus. Some students reported these outside relationships provided validation that they

deserved to be in the program, a space where the students could be their authentic selves, and provided them with a sense of value and purpose throughout the time in their program.

Of the four participants who spoke of this super-ordinate theme, Greg, a 31-year-old doctoral student in his third year of study, highlighted how social support from other students on campus was essential to him remaining in his current program:

What do I get out of those relationships? So, I didn't really have anybody to talk to, so I guess they were more so emotional support...we joked about it that we almost transferred a bunch of times and I almost sat out a year and tried to go somewhere else because it was just, it was just that bad. So, they [other students on campus] do a great job of just telling me, "You're supposed to be here, you deserve to be here, you're doing a great job."

This quote highlighted the importance and impact of having a positive and supportive relationship with other students. This participant's statement indicated how having that comradery amongst other graduate students served as a means of validating one's experiences and justifying their presence of being on campus and within the program.

Christina, a 27-year-old in her second year of study, discussed the importance of returning home to be in an environment where she felt comfortable:

Every weekend I go home. So, a little bit of an added stress but it gives me somewhat of an outlet. Like in my master's program, there was so many people that I found. They weren't the only Black people, and it was just like we found each other, and I'm still really close with them, but I just don't have that in [town that current university is in]. I think it's part of the reason that I come back [home] so often. I just don't feel the need to, or I don't feel comfortable just kind of staying up there and just being with everyone that's there.

Another student, Alex- a 41-year-doctoral student in his fourth year of study- discussed how he used volunteer and work experiences outside of his department and program not only as a means of coping, but as a way of providing himself with a space where he could be his authentic self. This participant discussed how these experiences replenished his drive to continue in his program:

So, I have these experiences that I call underground railroad experiences, right? I have jobs that my department does not know about...that allow me to be myself and be authentic and I use that as a coping strategy. That's also a coping strategy because those authentic spaces give me value, they give me a sense of purpose, and they rejuvenate me for the fight. So, I use underground railroad experiences as coping as well.

This participant's quote explored how, for some students, it was important and necessary to seek outside spaces where their qualifications and experiences were respected and held in high esteem. This notion that students need to seek out these outside spaces in order to get these forms of positive feedback suggests programs and departments need to do more in their attempts to foster a sense of inclusivity for students from diverse backgrounds.

### **Actively Utilizing Self-Care Techniques**

Four students reported actively incorporating self-care techniques throughout their program. While some students discussed utilizing common forms of self-care, such as returning home or listening to music, Felicia, a 22-year-old in her first year of study, reported using her religion as a source of support throughout this experience: “I’ll you know go to church so I definitely done a lot more like spending time with God and reading my Bible things like that because I have felt more lonely I guess since I’ve gotten here.”

This participant’s use of religion as a source of support highlights past research (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2008) that find that religion is a source of support for Black graduate students.

### ***Monitoring One’s Engagement in Conversations about Race in Predominantly White Spaces***

A unique subordinate theme appeared in some transcripts where the participants reported monitoring their engagement in conversations about race when in predominantly White spaces. The following participants discuss how they monitor the level of engagement they have when it comes to conversations of race, particularly when they are in a setting where they are one of few Black students. Of the two students who mentioned this theme, Felicia, a 22-year-old in her first year of study, described how draining these conversations could be if she was constantly engaging in them and how this act of self-care was a means of counteracting the possible negative effects.

So, sometimes I guess having to adjust, not responding to everything and not wanting to seem like you’re overly angry about things. But I think that- the program really encourages us to like have these discussions and things like that but also like I noticed that I’ve gotten a little bit of an awareness at least that I don’t want to be the only person that’s always like bringing up those kinds of things. And it can feel like you are especially if you’re the only Black person (laughs)... So, sometimes I’ll do it but sometimes on a given day it’ll be really exhausting to do that like multiple times.

Christina reinforced how her refusal, at times, to engage in these conversations was a way of preserving her own emotional wellbeing.

There was this one class, in the theories class. So, it was me and my cohort and I’m the only Black person in the class and we were talking about racism and the cost of racism...and I just was tired, and I was like, “I don’t feel like doing this.” I just had a whole emotional experience, and it was around the time of that man who had been shot in his home- and it brought back the feeling of “I’m not doing this” like I refuse to do this. And I could tell they wanted to give me the opportunity to do it and I was just like, “no, you guys got this now. I’m just tired.”

Each of these quotes related to the use of self-care imply that these students must be cognizant of how their identity as a Black student comes with unique considerations. In understanding this, the participants explore the various ways that they may choose to maneuver conversations surrounding race with individuals from their program.

### **Self-Motivating Factors that Led to Persistence**

Throughout the transcripts, three students discussed self-motivating factors that served as protective factors throughout their doctoral experience. These factors included understanding of how obtaining a doctoral degree would help achieve future goals, as well as the intrinsic motivation to finish their programs and confidence in their ability to do so. Of the three students who mentioned this super-ordinate theme, Edith, a 23-year-old in her second year of study, discussed her awareness of how obtaining a doctoral degree would help with her career goals and provide her with a wide variety of options. Edith also discussed how important it was that she did not want to feel forced to pursue higher education or be denied an opportunity because of education.

I think that in undergrad when I was applying and everything, I knew that if I wanted to have like the maximum impact that I wanted- so if I wanted to go into like teaching, if I wanted to go in research, if I wanted to still be a counselor, whatever- that having a Ph.D. at least would give me all open doors. Cause I knew some masters programs don't always give you that...and I don't want anyone to have to tell me I have to go back to school later... I don't ever want to be applying for a job position and someone says 'oh, well we had to take that person over you because that person had a Ph.D.' I don't want anyone to deny me access to different things.

Christina reported that a protective factor for her was never truly considering leaving the program: "I know what I want to do afterwards. I also don't think of not finishing as like an option." Another student, Daniel, a 25-year-old in his first year of study, discussed how a protective factor for him was a desire to prove his worthiness to others:

She [participant's advisor in master's program] would ask me like why I wanted the Ph.D. So, she would, her and I would have really good conversations around that and a lot of it I noticed, or initially noticed, that it stemmed from trying to prove other people wrong and trying to prove myself worthy of it.

### **Impact of Cohort on Experience in Program**

Another super-ordinate theme that appeared in several interviews was the impact that support, or a lack of support from one's cohort, could have on one's experience in their respective program. Two prevalent emphases within this theme included how feeling supported by one's cohort could lead to positive experiences within one's program and how the lack of diversity within one's cohort impacted the student's sense of belonging and feelings of being understood.

Of the four students who explored this theme, Edith discussed how feeling comfortable and supported amongst her cohort members allowed for her to have positive experiences within her program. This participant explored how her cohort members supported her in decisions to embrace her Black identity:

I have been natural [reference to participant's hair] the whole time I've known my advisor, but last year around this time I was contemplating having locs and was worried about it being professional, etcetera. So, I discussed it at my lab meeting, six of us girls total, I was, of course, nervous about it and they asked more questions about it and why and when I explained to them why, they all

were super supportive and rooting for me! She told me before that my hair was really nice, and I felt encouraged to change my look, even more in a "Black" way. One of my White cohort members has been super supportive and complements me for them sometimes. I know this isn't a normal protective factor, but I think it is relevant to feeling accepted.

This participant's quote speaks to how support and encouragement from cohort members can help alleviate some concerns that Black students have when it comes to navigating academia and what is considered "professional." From a program perspective, this quote speaks to the importance of having a wide array of students from all backgrounds in order to develop an atmosphere where students do not feel that they must subscribe to more mainstream appearances in order to be successful or taken seriously within their profession. While the previous participant discussed how cohort members can have a positive impact on one's experience within the program, Greg, who is one of the four participants who examined this theme, expressed his feelings that his cohort peers does not understand or empathize with Black students:

Researcher: What do you feel is the most challenging part of being a Black doctoral student?

Participant: The most challenging part?...After the Black man got killed, I feel bad that I can't remember his name, but after that Black man got killed by that female cop out in Oklahoma...And I came to class like the next day or a couple of days after and my classmate was mad about a puppy that she tried to adopt and she had to take back to the animal shelter. It's just like I don't care about that. Black people are getting murdered in the streets by cops and so, but I can't express that openly and so it's just...I think that's what the hardest. I just can't be myself.

Researcher: How do you feel that if your cohort was more diverse that would've impacted your experience?

Participant: I probably would've been less likely to say that I wanted to transfer, or I would've been less likely to isolate myself from them because they can't understand my experiences and in a lot of cases, they don't want to understand my experience. So, if I tell you in class...no I can't kick it because I have on jeans, Timberlands, and a hoodie today, and I don't want to walk home in the dark because I don't want to get shot and killed by cops; if your response is "hahaha...that's a funny joke" like no, I'm not playing. They kill us for that. So, they don't understand my reality.

This participant's experience within his cohort explores the reality that some Black doctoral students may have to face, especially when they are one of the few Black individuals within their respective programs. Of relevance is the difficulty in empathizing with the participant's experiences of the world. It is important to recognize that, especially in graduate programs within the healthcare profession, there is still a need for more programming and discussion aimed at increasing awareness and empathy for communities that are often marginalized by society. From a program, department and campus wide level, topics related to diversity and inclusion need to be woven into curricula and events so that students, faculty and

staff can empathize and attempt to understand others' experiences that may differ from their own.

With regards to the second research question, two super-ordinate themes appeared within the transcripts: supportive, empathetic and understanding advising relationship with mentor and the need for diverse curriculum and initiatives.

### **Supportive, Empathetic and Understanding Advising Relationship with Mentor**

The focus across the interviews was the impact that the advising relationship had on the student's journey and what these students received, or would have wanted to receive, from their mentors in order to succeed. Of the six students who discussed this theme, Daniel discussed how his advisor's patience and support throughout his first year in the program greatly contributed to a positive experience in his program thus far:

I think like we [advisor and participant] kind of got to know each other a little bit more and I saw where he was coming from and I think he saw where I was coming from as well and now we're like, I think we're more in tune with each other... And I told him the idea of like "hey I'm looking to do some type of research, I don't know what yet, about Black men raised in majority White communities" ... And he's like "you know, that sounds like really interesting. I might be able to put you in touch with certain people. If there's anything that you are reading that you think I need to check out, just let me know so I can stay up to date with that you're doing"... That meant a lot to me when I saw the work that our lab was doing specifically directed towards Black men. He definitely stood by his word in our interview when he said that "we try to meet you guys with where you're at" and what your interests are. So that meant a lot to me to hear that from him.

This participant's experience explores ways in which advisors from different racial backgrounds can provide Black students with support when it comes to research endeavors and becoming comfortable in academia. Alex described how his advisor's support came in the form of guidance on how to successfully promote his research and progress within the program, while also utilizing personal privileges for the benefit of the student:

If you look at his history, he has a history of working on these issues and even though he has privilege he uses that in good ways... So, he uses that knowledge of the system to help me skirt through it. So, our relationship is very upfront. I can talk to him honestly and openly... And straight up he can say well, you know, I'm not telling you what to do but change things so we can get the approval. And he always says, this one quote he said in an interview that really stood out to me, he said you have all of your life to be brilliant, just get it done... You can get knee deep in what you really want to do once you're a doctor, this part is just about completion... So, I never lose sight of that when I work with him so I know the changes that he's giving me is not some... "I don't feel you're capable intellectually" [but rather] how can we balance what you want to study and getting it approved.

Like Daniel, Alex's excerpt discussed the potential implications and dynamics in cross-cultural advising relationships. This participant points out that, in his relationship with his White advisor, his advisor would use his knowledge and experiences to help him reach his

goals. While many of the participants discussed how a supportive advising relationship had a positive impact on their experiences within the program, participants who reported having Black advisors reported that they had a meaningful impact on their experience. Of the three students who had Black mentors, Brad, who is a 24-year-old in his third year of study, discussed how having multiple Black advisors allowed him the space to at times “forget” that he was on a predominantly White institution. Brad also explored how having a Black mentor allowed him to obtain knowledge regarding the discipline of psychology and learn how to navigate academia as a Black psychologist:

It’s been kind of interesting because I’m on a research team, like I work for Dr. [advisor’s last name] so my research team is mostly Black people and it’s essentially all of the Black people in the program. So, I get the privilege to be able to forget about it a lot until I’m in one of the other spaces that isn’t so heavily Black...And then like the juxtaposition of being around a bunch of, a very White program, that considers itself to be, for a lack of a better term, woke but definitely has a lot of growth to do we’ll say... It’s been a very interesting experience. Obviously [advisor] is very well known name amongst race and research and so there’s a lot of experience and knowledge that you can gain from working with somebody like that...Like interpersonally, hearing about the difficulties that she’s faced and still facing when it comes to being a Black woman in academia and kind of being able to learn from her experiences...It’s a constant reminder that it’s doable...So it’s like a beacon of hope.

Like the previous student, Christina explores how having a Black mentor allowed her a space to process her experiences within the program. Her mentor also was a source of support to help her navigate to her goal of being a Black professor in academia:

So, I’ve gotten to bring a lot of that up, my stuff, up to the team and to him. So, it’s been really helpful to process that. And he’s been very good about helping me as far as mentoring because I want to be in academia and I mean, being a faculty of color is a whole nother [sic] ball game...I’ve-I’ve heard just countless stories of the limits and institutional barriers and just the ways that people talk to you, and I didn’t know how to navigate that right? I’ve never been in that situation. So, he’s been helping me. And so just knowing how to navigate that, I think it’s super valuable.

Felicia discussed how, if she did not have a Black advisor, she might not have been as comfortable disclosing certain aspects of herself to her advisor:

Researcher: How do you think it would have been different if your advisor was of a different racial background?

Participant: So, I might not have felt comfortable talking to them about how I’m adjusting or some things that I maybe miss or anything like that. Like I might not feel comfortable saying that to them. But I might not think that they would get it, or I would feel that I’m maybe complaining...But yeah, I think- I think that would probably be it. Yeah, yeah, I think maybe either they just wouldn’t ask me those types of questions, or I wouldn’t feel comfortable like giving those types of answers.

The participants who had Black advisors indicated that their relationships with their advisors provided them with a space to process their experiences, allowed them to have a better understanding of what life within academia would look like and instilled in them a sense that they could accomplish their goals because they had a role model who is where they would like to be.

### **Need for Diverse Curriculums and Initiatives**

The results mentioned beforehand highlighted the super-ordinate themes seen in the interviews that directly speak to the participant's experiences and the research questions that we sought to examine. Participants also spoke to a peripheral theme that provided insight into how programs can recruit and enroll more diverse students into the field of counseling psychology. Throughout the interviews, there was a subtheme related to the need for diverse curriculums and initiatives. This subtheme encompasses two aspects: the need for and importance of highlighting the diversity within the field of psychology and the need to highlight the contributions that psychologists of color are providing to the field.

Three participants discussed the need for and importance of highlighting diversity within the field of psychology. These students discussed how the field of psychology needs to do a better job of spreading awareness of psychologists of color in their discipline so that more students of color can begin to imagine how they could potentially fit in the field.

Alex discussed the need to change how psychology is taught in order to diversify the students who choose to pursue the field:

The problem is...that you lose Black students in the Intro to Psych class. It's taught by old White men...that's been in office for 75 years and still using Power Points and chalkboards and students are turning off. So, students are going to gravitate towards disciplines where they see themselves... So, you've got to start at the undergraduate level and even high school. And start making it cool to be a psychologist, but being a psychologist goes against the values that we are taught as Black people which is: be strong, don't talk about what's wrong in my house and so we get through the cultural mistrust piece to get people to see that psychology is something that they can do because psychology is often something that is used against them.

Along with the need to highlight the contributions that psychologists of color are providing to the field, four participants also discussed the need for programs, departments, and universities to implement initiatives focused on the academic success of Black students and other students of color. These initiatives ranged from taking the lead on incorporating a more diverse curriculum to creating spaces where Black graduate students could support one another, with the goal of creating inclusive and diverse cohorts. In the following excerpt, Brad discusses how program curriculums are often developed from the perspective of a White clinician or researcher and how providing examples of clinicians and researchers of color could be beneficial to the student body and program. Brad also speaks to his experience of this task being placed on students, instead of being a priority to faculty.

So, a lot of the reading or classwork is based on the assumption that the clinician is White, and the client is either White or some other and there's not really a lot of discussion about what it means to be a clinician of color or a researcher of color...So it's nice to kind of build those spaces and talk about that as students and pulling in alumnae from different years as well. It would be interesting to

try to like find the examples of readings and the like of Black writers and Black clinicians. I think so often when that's mentioned it kind of comes on to us as students to find it. So, faculty and the program taking the initiative themselves to hunt that down and value that and place it in their syllabi would be really good.

With these considerations in mind, programs and faculty members should be more deliberate in their attempts to create curricula that reflect the changing demographic of individuals pursuing careers in psychology and potential clients seeking psychological services. Furthermore, programs and departments should consider how they can provide social support to students from marginalized backgrounds. As Brad mentioned above, this could potentially be in the form of providing students with access to willing alumni who come from the same or similar backgrounds or providing students with the space to create their own student groups.

### **Discussion**

The results of the present study provide deeper insights into the experiences of Black doctoral students within counseling psychology doctoral programs in predominantly White institutions. It is important to note that while all participants highlighted using social supports throughout this journey, students who felt that they were not supported from individuals within their programs sought out this social support in other forms throughout campus, as well as off campus when needed. Therefore, programs need to create more inclusive spaces for Black doctoral students so that they can rely on these sources of support.

The importance of social support throughout students' doctoral journeys can also be seen in another theme present in the transcripts: support among cohort members having a positive, meaningful impact on their experience and retention within the program. An interesting factor that appeared in several interviews was the observation of the lack of diversity within the cohorts and how this impacted an individual's sense of belonging. These accounts of how a lack of diversity within cohorts impacted students should raise concerns for professors and administrators working with doctoral programs. Greg explained this lack of diversity within his cohort resulted in an inability to understand realities he faces within the world. Greg also reported feeling unable to seek out his cohort members for support during difficult times. Greg's explanation falls in line with previous research that has highlighted how graduate students of color may feel isolated within their departments or programs due to a lack of diversity (Gay, 2004; Gildersleeve et al., 2011). While additional research needs to be performed on the impact cohort member support can have on the journey to the doctorate, programs should begin considering how diversity - or a lack of diversity - can impact students from marginalized communities. In addition, a lack of diverse faculty and students restricts the growth and development of students and faculty from underrepresented groups, as well as traditionally represented groups. The emphasis placed on the impact of social support reinforces the need for more diverse cohorts, not just as a means of decreasing students' sense of isolation but also as a means of increasing all students' personal and professional growth by being exposed to varied lived experiences and perspectives.

While the impact that lack of diversity within cohorts was seen in some interviews, another key factor that was explored was the impact that having diverse faculty members can have on student experiences. Participants who reported having a Black mentor expressed how having this relationship was critical not only in increasing their sense of belonging, but also in providing them invaluable insights on how to navigate academia as a Black academic. These participants also reported that having a Black mentor allowed them to have a safe space to be

able to process their experiences and adjustments within the program while also having role models whom they can base future career aspirations on. These findings support previous literature that focused on the experiences of Black doctoral students (Rasheem et al., 2018) and the impact that having a supervisor with similar lived experiences can have on students' personal growth, professional growth and career navigation. This study also highlights the importance of White faculty members' awareness of multicultural factors when providing supervision and being able to offer this student population spaces where they can be supported to some extent if there are few or no faculty members of color on campus or within the program. These results emphasize that, while having Black faculty members as mentors is certainly advantageous to the students' development, a mentor from another racial or ethnic background who is willing to explore and empathize with the students' experiences is also critical to the student's success.

These findings provide faculty and staff members within counseling psychology programs with insights into how Black doctoral students feel about their experiences with these programs. Considering the emphasis that counseling psychology programs place on multiculturalism, social justice and diversity, faculty members and staff should take into consideration how participants highlighted that more work still needs to be done with regards to these areas. An aspect that was especially prevalent in the transcripts was the impact that having faculty of color had on the experiences of the students interviewed. More effort and intention need to be put forth from counseling psychology programs in recruiting and retaining faculty members of color within their institutions. Results suggest that the presence of these faculty members has a significant impact on Black students' experiences within their program. Along with a greater focus being placed on recruiting, retaining, and mentoring faculty members of color within academia, counseling psychology programs need to be more cognizant of providing Black doctoral students with the mentoring to potentially pursue a career in academia. The participants indicated how having a Black advisor provided them with a role model for how to maneuver through academia; however, non-Black faculty members and advisors should also be aware and be able to provide their advisees with the tools and skills needed to thrive within academia. Greater thought and consideration should be put forth from counseling psychology departments on how to increase the number of Black doctoral students who choose to remain in academia upon graduation.

### **Limitations**

Given the small sample size in this qualitative study, findings should be taken with caution. The sample group used was purposely made homogenous to be best suited with the research method used. Therefore, readers should avoid overgeneralizing or applying these results to populations not represented within the sample. Given the research methodology, there was a small sample size used in this study which could have impacted the resulting themes seen overall. In addition, the fact that all the participants were enrolled in counseling psychology doctoral programs could also have impacted their responses. The experiences of Black doctoral students in different specializations within psychology as well as other academic programs would likely yield different findings than those of the study sample.

It should also be noted that the participants were from various years of their doctoral programs. There is a possibility that the respective year in the program could have impacted on participants' experiences thus far and/or that sense of safety in the program may have affected honesty and authenticity during the interview. How the participant's geographic location potentially impacted their experience in their program is another factor to consider. If a participant was attending a program that was in a major metropolitan city, their experience may be different than a participant who is attending a program in a more rural part of the United

States. A doctoral program in a metropolitan area may provide their students with more access to protective factors, such as more diverse student bodies and neighborhoods outside of campus, compared to their peers in more rural areas of the country. Furthermore, the findings did not explicitly discuss or explore the nuanced differences that may occur at the intersections of gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other dimensions of one's identity. Further examination of participants' intersecting identities potentially could have impacted the results that were obtained throughout the interviews focused on student experience within their program.

### **Future Research**

Much of the existing literature focuses on the factors that compel students of color to leave their doctoral programs (Ewing et al., 1996; Gay, 2004; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009; Shears et al., 2004). Additional research needs to be completed on factors that motivate Black students to complete doctoral study despite the obstacles in their path. Further research is needed to determine how Black students have overcome obstacles on their path toward their doctorate and how they managed to incorporate self-care techniques when appropriate. Additionally, it is important to examine factors students found helpful and motivating in the mentoring relationship.

Future researchers may examine whether the experiences of Black doctoral students are different in other academic arenas. As mentioned earlier, counseling psychology programs often tout multiculturalism and social justice as a pillar of their discipline. Thus, future research may examine the degree to which other academic disciplines incorporate multiculturalism as it relates to mentoring relationships and creating diverse cohorts. In addition, future research may explore how allied disciplines prepare their students for a range of career paths.

A central theme seen throughout the transcripts was the importance of support within the advising relationship. Given the continued lack of faculty of color, researchers may also continue examining cross-cultural advising relationships and if or how these faculty members attempt to incorporate culturally competent or sensitive advising. The students who reported having positive experiences with advisors of a different race discussed factors and situations that led to enhanced feelings of encouragement within the mentoring relationship. Future studies can focus on cross-cultural mentoring relationships and aspects of this relationship that were helpful in the students' achievement and accomplishments.

Future studies may also examine factors influencing the retention of faculty members of color in counseling psychology training programs. Findings from the present study highlighted the value and importance of having diverse faculty members. Programs and departments should find ways to mentor, support, and ultimately increase retention rates among faculty members of color. Additionally, more research needs to be conducted on the impact diverse curriculums can have on diversifying individuals who are pursuing certain graduate degrees. As Alex and Brad mentioned previously, many of the introductory courses to psychology available to undergraduates, and most graduate school courses rarely include discussions of clinicians of color. Future research should investigate the impact that highlighting the efforts and accomplishments of psychologists of color would have on diversifying individuals seeking graduate degrees in psychology or mental health related disciplines.

## References

- American Psychological Association. (2016, December 1). *Summary report, graduate study in psychology 2017: Student demographics*. <http://www.apa.org/education/grad/survey-data/2017-student-demographics>
- Brill, J. L., Balcanoff, K. K., Land, D., Gogarty, M., & Turner, F. (2014). Best practices in doctoral retention: Mentoring. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 4(2), 26–37.
- Buell, C. (2004). Models of mentoring in communication. *Communication Education*, 53(1), 56–73.
- Chan, A. W., Yeh, C. J., & Krumboltz, J. D. (2015). Mentoring ethnic minority counseling and clinical psychology students: A multicultural, ecological, and relational model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 62(4), 592–607.
- Charleston, L. J., Adserias, R. P., Lang, N. M., & Jackson, J. F. L. (2014). Intersectionality and STEM: The role of race and gender in the academic pursuits of African American women in STEM. *Journal of Progressive Policy & Practice*, 2(3), 1–21.
- Chen, P. D., Ingram, T. N., & Davis, L. K. (2014). Bridging student engagement and satisfaction: A comparison between historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly White institutions. *Journal of Negro Education*, 83(4), 565–579. <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.83.4.0565>
- Davidson, M. N., & Foster-Johnson, L. (2001). Mentoring in the preparation of graduate first authors of color. *Review of Educational Research*, 71(4), 549–574.
- Ewing, K. M., Richardson, T., James-Myers, L., & Russell, R. K. (1996). The relationship between racial identity attitudes, worldview and African American graduate students' experience of the imposter phenomenon. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 22(1), 53–66.
- Felder, P. (2010). On doctoral student development: Exploring faculty mentoring in the shaping of African American doctoral student success. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2010.1160>
- Felder, P. P., Stevenson, H. C., & Gasman, M. (2014). Understanding race in doctoral student socialization. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 9, 21–42.
- Fontaine, T. P. (2012). The impact of faculty—student interaction on Black doctoral students attending historically Black institutions. *Journal of Negro Education*, 81(2), 136–147.
- Gasman, M., Gerstl-Pepin, C., Anderson-Thompkins, S., Rasheed, L., & Hathaway, K. (2004). Negotiating power, developing trust: Transgressing race and status in the academy. *Teachers College Record*, 106(4), 689–715.
- Gay, G. (2004). Navigating marginality en route to the professoriate: Graduate students of color learning and living in academia. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(2), 265–288.
- Gildersleeve, R. E., Croom, N. N., & Vasquez, P. L. (2011). "Am I going crazy?!" A critical race analysis of doctoral education. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 44(1), 93–114.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A. & Johnson, L. (2006) How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Harper, S. (2013). Am I my brother's teacher? Black undergraduates, racial socialization, and peer pedagogies in predominantly White post secondary contexts. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 183–211.
- Henfield, M. S., Woo, H., & Washington, A. (2013). A phenomenological investigation of African American counselor education students' challenging experiences. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 52(2), 122–136.
- Hollingsworth, M., & Fassinger, R. (2002). The role of faculty mentors in the research training

- of counseling psychology doctoral students. *Journal of Counseling psychology*, 49(3), 324–330.
- Johnson, B., Batia, A., & Haun, J. (2008). Perceived stress among graduate students: Roles, responsibilities and social support. *Virginia Journal*, 29(3), 31-35.
- Johnson-Bailey, J., Valentine, T., Cervero, R., & Bowles, T. (2008). Lean on me: The support experiences of Black graduate students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 77, 365-381.
- Johnson-Bailey, J., Valentine, T., Cervero, R. M., & Bowles, T. A. (2009). Rooted in the soil: The social experiences of Black graduate students at a southern research university. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(2), 178-203.
- Jones, T. B., Wilder, J., & Osborne-Lampkin, L. (2013). Employing a Black feminist approach to doctoral advising: Preparing Black women for the professoriate. *Journal of Negro Education*, 82(3), 326–338.
- Ko, L. T., Kachchaf, R. R., Ong, M., & Hodari, A. K. (2013). Narratives of the double bind: Intersectionality in life stories of women of color in physics, astrophysics and astronomy. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 1513(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1063/1.4789692>
- Lin, L., Christidis, P., Stamm, K., & Conroy, J. (2019). *The academic workforce: Characteristics of psychology research doctorates in faculty positions (1995-2015)*. American Psychological Association.
- Mackey, H., & Shannon, K. (2014). Comparing alternative voices in the academy: Navigating the complexity of mentoring relationships from divergent ethnic backgrounds. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 22(4), 338–353.
- Masuda, A., Anderson, P., & Edmonds, J. (2012). Help-seeking attitudes, mental health stigma, and self concealment among African American college students. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43(7), 773-786.
- Maton, K. I., Wimms, H. E., Grants, S. K., Wittig, M. A., Rogers, M. R., & Vasquez, M. J. T. (2011). Experiences and perspectives of African-American, Latina/o, Asian-American and European-American psychology graduate students: A national study. *Culturally Diverse Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 17(1), 68–78.
- Mcclain, S., Beasley, S. T., Jones, B., Awosogba, O., Jackson, S., & Cokley, K. (2016). An examination of the impact of racial and ethnic identity, impostor feelings, and minority status stress on the mental health of Black college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 44(2), 101-117.
- Moore, P. J., & Toliver, S. D. (2010). Intraracial dynamics of Black professors' and Black students' communication in traditionally White colleges and universities. *Journal of Black Studies*, 40(5), 932–945.
- Museus, S. D., Zhang, D., & Kim, M. J. (2016). Developing and evaluating the culturally engaging campus environments (CECE) scale: An examination of content and construct validity. *Research in Higher Education*, 57(6), 768-793.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2017, May 1). *Postbaccalaureate enrollment*. National Center for Education Statistics. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_chb.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_chb.asp)
- Office of Planning Evaluation and Policy Development. (2016). *Advancing diversity and inclusion in higher education: Key data highlights focusing on race and ethnicity and promising practices*. United States Department of Education.
- Ponterotto, J. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 126-136.
- Rasheem, S., Alleman, A., Mushonga, D., Anderson, D., & Ofahengau Vakalahi, H. F. (2018). Mentor-shape: Exploring the mentoring relationships of Black women in doctoral

- programs. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 26(1), 50–69.
- Reeder, M. C., & Schmitt, N. (2013). Motivational and judgment predictors of African American academic achievement at PWIs and HBCUs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 54(1), 29–42. doi:10.1353/csd.2013.0006
- Remaker, D. N., Gonzalez, M. M., Houston-Armstrong, T., & Sprague-Connors, G. (2021). Women of color and mentorship in graduate training. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 15(1), 70–75. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tep0000297>
- Robinson, S. J. (2013). Spoketokenism: Black women talking back about graduate school experiences. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 16(2), 155–181.
- Scheel, M. J., Stabb, S. D., Cohn, T. J., Duan, C., & Sauer, E. M. (2018). Counseling psychology model training program. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 46(1), 6–49.
- Schmidt, P. (2016, November 25). New insights on what psychologically rattles graduate students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/New-Insights-on-What/238399>
- Shears, J., Lewis, C., & Furman, R. (2004). The dilemmas of African-American men from historically Black colleges and universities in completing doctoral degrees from predominantly White institutions. *Essays in Education*, 11(8), 1–10.
- Smith, J., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2012). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE Publications.
- Stout, R., Archie, C., Cross, D., & Carman, C. A. (2018). The relationship between faculty diversity and graduation rates in higher education. *Intercultural Education*, 29(3), 399–417.
- Taylor, E., & Antony, J. S. (2000). Stereotype threat reduction and wise schooling: Towards the successful socialization of African American doctoral students in education. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69(3), 184–198.
- Young, J. R., Bullough Jr., R. V., Draper, R., Smith, L. K., & Erickson, L. B. (2005). Novice teacher growth and personal models of mentoring: Choosing compassion over inquiry. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 13(2), 169–188.

### Author Note

Jessica L. Elliott is a 29-year-old heterosexual, cisgender female of African American and Nicaraguan heritage. At the time of the study, she was in her third year of doctoral study in counseling psychology at a private university in New Jersey. The first author is interested in conducting research on the lived experiences of those within the African Diaspora. During her master's program she led a study that focused on Black Male college retention rates and the factors that encouraged or hindered their pursuit of a college education. Please direct correspondence to [jessica.elliott@student.shu.edu](mailto:jessica.elliott@student.shu.edu).

Jason D. Reynolds, Ph.D. (Taewon Choi) is a 37-year-old heterosexual, Korean American, transracially adopted, cisgender male. He is an Assistant Professor of counseling psychology at a private university in California. He has previous research experience on identity, transracial adoption, names, and mentorship. Please direct correspondence to [jreynolds6@usfca.edu](mailto:jreynolds6@usfca.edu).

Minsun Lee, Ph.D. is a heterosexual, Korean American, cisgender female, who is an assistant professor in a counseling psychology program. She researches bicultural identity and the intersections of gender, race, and culture. She has previous experience supervising student research on Black Americans' racial identity, critical consciousness, and sociopolitical action. Please direct correspondence to [minsun.lee@shu.edu](mailto:minsun.lee@shu.edu).

**Acknowledgements:** We would like to thank Kalya Castillo, MEd. for all her help and efforts with this study.

Copyright 2021: Jessica L. Elliott, Jason D. Reynolds (Taewon Choi), Minsun Lee, and Nova Southeastern University.

### **Article Citation**

Elliott, J. L., Reynolds, J. D., & Lee, M. (2021). And still I rise: Protective factors for Black counseling psychology doctoral students from predominantly White institutions. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(7), 2206-2225. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4771>

---