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Sister-scholar: Making Flesh the Lived Experiences of Black Women Professional Academic Advisors for Undergraduates

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SISTER-SCHOLAR: MAKING FLESH THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK
WOMEN PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC ADVISORS FOR UNDERGRADUATES

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my maternal and paternal family members both alive and deceased – they are all a part of the quilt that comprises my identity. I could not have completed this process without the encouragement of my son, Jawuan Winfrey, and my parents, Johnnie and Larry Winfrey. They allowed me to forsake many parts of my life with them in order for me to complete my dissertation, and for this I am forever grateful. Jawuan has been my better half. He maintained his even keel as I stressed over writing – and as I stressed over having writer's block. He told me I could do it when I questioned myself. My mother and father also believed in me when I doubted myself openly to them. I am the woman I am today because of them. My three older brothers, André, Damion, and Antwuan have also helped me become the woman I am today; they protected me, they encouraged me, and they treated me like their "baby-girl," allowing me to blossom into my own womanhood. I also dedicate this dissertation to my deceased grandparents, Lillian and Albert Langston, Sr., and Helen and Mont Winfrey. They encouraged me at a young age to be the woman I am today – and they were with me throughout the five chapters. My love for them is stitched together in the five chapters that made my dissertation; therefore, I dedicate this dissertation to them all.

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Abstract

Although research exists on Black women undergraduates and Black women faculty in American higher education, there is scant research on how Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates are experiencing the academy. One way to learn more about the life experiences of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates is through an analysis of their narratives. The purpose of this study was to explore how Black women are perceiving their lived experiences in a public university. This present study also sought to explore how the narratives of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates in higher education can be operationalized for student success. The present study consisted of three research questions and they were:

1.   How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates perceiving their lived experiences in the academy of a public university?

2.   How do Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates find value in their lived experiences?

3.   How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates relaying their stories to other Black women in academia?

This present study used Black feminist theory and narrative inquiry as a methodology to analyze the data gleaned from interviewing three Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates at a public, four-year university in the southeastern region of the United States of America (U.S.). The major findings revealed that academic advisors for undergraduates need support from their university and from the colleges and departments for which they work. The findings show that the various knowledges of

Black women academic advisors for undergraduates are devalued. The findings show that the participants are affected by the treatment of Black Americans. Additionally, the findings indicated that the participants do engage in self-valuation through work. Finally, the findings revealed that the participants bring their biases and worldviews to work to help others. Implications for practice show that universities should consider hiring more undergraduate advising staff to allow professional academic advisors for undergraduates the time to practice in their academic philosophies.

Keywords: Black women professionals, Black feminist theory, undergraduate academic advisors, narrative inquiry, critical advising, feminist pedagogy, higher education, student success

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

"So, how did you get your job?" I was not sure what he meant by his question. As I sat there in the panel interview as the only Black woman in a room full of mostly men save for the other woman of color to my right, I had to give an assured answer. I quickly gauged the gendered dynamics in the room. If only he knew my background as a person, a woman, a Black woman, and how many times I had been denied a full-time position prior to the one I currently hold as an academic advisor for undergraduates, he would have appreciated my tempered answer. "I imagine," I began, "that I was hired because I was deemed qualified for the position and my resumé reflected that." Later in the conversation he asked me to provide an answer to someone else's research: "Why do Black people not interact with White people at this institution?" I answered his question the way I usually answer questions – with a question. I responded, "I think a better question would be, why do White people not interact more with Black people at this institution?" But I was not saying this to be a smart-aleck, I was asking a genuine question as a Black woman who has tried several times to befriend White people on campus – usually my classmates. And to no avail. He smiled a grin of silence. His eventual utterance was, "Good question." I wondered when the most graceful time for a quick exit would be. But the interview continued for a bit longer. The woman to my right then raised her hand and asked his permission to speak. It was "granted," and I had had enough. I was then convinced that she and I were in a room full of sexist (and/or silent) men. I wondered if this was because both she and I are women of color. After the interview ended, I quickly exited and realized that program was not for someone like me.

Experiences are "made flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39) through stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Black women are experiencing higher education in different ways and from various perspectives. In particular, Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates must educate and must work "while Black and female" (Robinson et al., 2013, p. 60). Being a Black woman represents a form of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995). Generally, intersectionality is defined as oppressions experienced simultaneously through "intersecting identities" (Moffitt, Harris, & Forbes-Berthoud, 2012, p. 79). Regarding intersectionality specifically, class, "racism and sexism readily intersect" in an American Black woman's lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 357). Although Crenshaw (1995) charged nearly thirty years ago that discourses regarding race and gender "have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of color," her declaration still has veracity in the 21st century (p. 358). The lived experiences of Black American women cannot be confined to the typical boundaries of racism and sexism the way "these boundaries are currently understood" (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 358). Therefore, the intersection at which these oppressions interact with other oppressions such as classism cannot be fully analyzed when only considering race or only considering gender (Crenshaw, 1995). As a critical social theory then, intersectionality allows for the convergence of ideas once thought disparate, bringing together, for example, Black women and their lived experiences in various places, times, and spaces (Collins, 2019).

While research exists on Black women undergraduates and Black women faculty, there is sparse research on how Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates are experiencing academia. How are these Black women, these sister-scholars (Allen, 1998), navigating through the racialized and gendered waters of

academia? How can the lived experiences of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates assist other Black women with self-valuing and with self-defining their multi-faceted identities? How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates finding value in their lived experiences? One way to learn more about the life experiences of sister-scholars is through an analysis of their personal narratives. Under the ideal of being a responsible researcher (Dillard, 2000), the narratives of Black women professionals must be "made visible" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 49) in order to be promoted as legitimate knowledge inside and outside of higher education.

Allen (1998) defined sister-scholar as a "woman of color academician" (p. 579). I chose to extend this definition to include a woman of color adult educator who subscribes to Black feminist theory and similar theoretical frameworks, applying them theoretically and practically so as to promote personal and social transformation. Many academic advisors for undergraduates consider themselves adult educators as they ascribe to the "advising as teaching" model coined in scholarly work on academic advising (Crookston, 1972/1994/2009). Therefore, a sister-scholar (Allen, 1998) in this present study is one who has a deep knowledge of academic advising and/or one who may also be a doctoral student in higher education or have obtained a doctorate in higher education. The idea of a sister-scholar necessitates a question for other sister-scholars: Who is the Black woman academic advisor for undergraduates? Better yet, who gets to define this Black woman academician's experiences (Collins, 2009; hooks, 1994) in higher education? Collins (2009) averred that only the Black woman can define the Black woman's experience, and these experiences are "made flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39) through stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Therefore, Black women must tell their stories. Black women must

write their stories. Black women must study these stories. Black women must then tell and re-tell (Clandinin, 2016) these stories. This paper seeks to demystify (Dillard, 2000) the ways that sister-scholars make meaning of their lived experiences.

Background of the Study

In the United States of America, Black women have historically moved within the "marginal positions" in higher education (Collins, 1986, p. 14). The Black woman academician represents an outsider-within, being marginalized through race and gender by the larger society of academics. Freire (2013) believed that adults had the capacity to think critically through conscientization, "becoming acutely aware of the oppressive forces that shape their realities" and experiences so that this awareness empowers the oppressed to recognize and eventually overcome their oppression (Boucouvalas & Lawrence, 2010, p. 43). Sister-scholars engage in critical advising to assist Black women advisees in conscientization and to assist the sister-scholars with self-definition and self-valuation as a form of personal and social transformation. Confronting race and gender in higher education from a Black feminist standpoint is done never objectively nor neutrally because "scholarship is political" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xiii). A Black woman academician, a sister-scholar, as critical adult educator, therefore, seeks to inspire social change (Brookfield, 2001) within an institution and among the individuals with which the sister-scholar interacts. As such, these Black women professionals question how social injustice happens and is maintained as it relates to race and gender, and how this injustice "affects educational systems" (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2010, p. 342).

Statement of the Problem

Experience is a learner's best instrument in the discipline of adult education (Lindeman, 1926). Yet, the role of the reflective, professional adult educator is viewed separately from who the adult educators are as individuals with individual histories and experiences (Brookfield, 2001). This separation from self is even more stark in the experiences of Black women adult educators, specifically, professional academic advisors for undergraduates. For example, I am one of only six Black woman professional academic advisors for undergraduates out of dozens of professional academic advisors for undergraduates at Mont University (this is a pseudonym), a majority-minority, 4-year, public university in the southeastern region of the United States of America (U.S.). Yet, I have many stories of how I have assisted Black women with completing a baccalaureate degree through not only intrusive and analytical advising techniques, but also through sharing my narratives and asking skilled questions during critical advising (Puroway, 2016). These are self-valuation stories, and they are student success stories, rarely told, rarely inquired about, and rarely shared with others in higher education.

Black woman Otherness/Alterity in Higher Education

Current research promotes academic advising among Black women graduate students and Black women faculty, but there is scant research concerning Black women academic advisors for undergraduates and their role in not only promoting student success, retention, and graduation (Brown et al., 1999; Felder, 2010; Heinrich, 1995; Patton, 2009), but also scant research in engaging in self-valuation and self-definition through academic advising. Student success is defined traditionally as increasing student

retention and preventing student attrition by promoting different strategies designed for student retention and graduation (Baer & Duin, 2014). However, Black women who use Black feminist theory while critically advising (Puroway, 2016) Black women undergraduate advisees promote traditional and non-traditional models of student success. Critical advising (Puroway, 2016) is defined generally as using a Freirean-inspired approach to academic advising to inspire students to engage in "critical reflections and actions" with the objective of creating active citizens (p. 4). Critical advisors seek to comprehend meaning and interpretation of experiences related to learning. When used by Black feminists, critical advising seeks to "connect the curriculum" (Puroway, 2016, p. 4) to a student's lived experiences.

Critical advising assists students in not only confronting the decisions they make, and not only to also apprise the students of the barriers institutionally built into systems, but to also assist students in being agents for personal and social transformation. This form of academic advising is also beneficial for the Black woman academic advisor for undergraduates who seeks to contribute to student success, but also seeks a deeper understanding of her personal and professional self. Lived experiences, conversations, words, and stories matter. As such, a sister-scholar's social, political, and economic well-being matters within the context of how she makes meaning of her work environment, and in the context of analyzing her lived experiences as a Black woman in America (Collins, 2009). Therefore, further research is needed to garner more understanding of the lived experiences of Black women professionals in academia.

Purpose of the Study

Using Black feminist theory (BFT) (Collins, 1986) as the theoretical framework, the purpose of this study was to explore how Black women are perceiving their lived experiences in the academy of a majority-minority, 4-year, public university. This present study sought to explore how the stories of Black women in higher education can be operationalized to promote not only the student success of their Black women advisees, but also to promote the lived experiences of the Black woman professional academic advisor for undergraduates as legitimate knowledge. These lived experiences were studied through an interpretation of their narratives since these narratives have scant research available. Critical examination should be employed while researching Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates, their relationship with their undergraduate advisees, and the academic advisors' relationship with each other as they move within the margins (hooks, 2010) of academia. The study was conducted with Black women professional academic advisors who advise for undergraduates in a majority-minority, public, 4-year university. The interviews were conducted through video conference.

Research Questions

The present study consisted of three research questions (RQ) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research questions were deliberately broad to capture all views of the participants and to "leave open the questioning" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 133).

1) How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates perceiving their lived experiences in the academy of a public university?

2) How do Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates find value in their lived experiences?

3) How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates relaying their stories to other Black women in academia?

Significance of the Study

Black women are presumed incompetent in higher education, whether it is professionally (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012) or as students. Harris and González (2012) attributed part of these assumptions to a lack of Black women professional representation in higher education. Yet, the overarching part is an academic culture still steeped in privilege – a culture historically hostile toward Black women (Harris & González, 2012). As a result, Black women and their experiences in higher education are still devalued (Collins, 2009; Robinson et al., 2013). Although the experiences of Black women are not valued historically as legitimate knowledge in higher education, much can be learned about Black women professional academic advisors as they interact with Black women undergraduates, the larger campus polity, and society-at-large. Critical advisors, such as sister-scholars, have the capacity to assume themselves a "subject" because they are capable of recognizing themselves as "object" to others (Freire, 2001, p. 46). These Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates who approach advising critically (Puroway, 2016) and from a Black feminist standpoint attempt to assist their advisees in becoming self-directed, self-valued, and self-defined (Collins, 1986) learners as the advisees pursue their baccalaureate degree, while the sister-scholars simultaneously reject the presumption of incompetence (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012) bestowed upon them for being "Black and female" (Robinson et al., 2013, p. 60). There

are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates who advise from a Black feminist perspective – a unique and marginalized group with scant research conducted on them – and their lived experiences and "taken-for-granted knowledge" (Collins, 2009, p. 38) deserve legitimation.

At its most salient, this advising approach is inspirational for "educators seeking to promote social justice" (Puroway, 2016, p. 4). From a theoretical standpoint, the lived experiences of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates should be valued in higher education scholarship because it makes explicit the positive effect that sharing stories among these women assist both sister-scholar and the Black woman undergraduate advisee in self-valuation and self-definition for their overall success as professionals and as students. As such, from this theoretical standpoint, the significance of this study ranged from exploring the lived experiences of Black women in academia, to analyzing how these lived experiences can benefit other marginalized groups in higher education, to analyzing how their narratives contribute to the overall profession of advising – allowing the audience a window into the lived experiences of sister-scholars. From a practical standpoint of promoting student success, all stakeholders on campus should be interested in student retention and graduation – all stakeholders should take interest in understanding historically marginalized groups such as Black women undergraduates and how this understanding can lead to higher graduation rates among this group. These same stakeholders should take interest in hiring and retaining Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates as well because these women are able to share their personal narratives with Black women undergraduates. Through an

analysis of sister-scholar narratives, I sought to promote the lived experiences of these Black women professionals as legitimate knowledge.

At its most practical use for personal transformation, critical advising supports students and sister-scholars with engaging in critical reflection (Brookfield, 2015a; Mezirow, 1997). This form of advising can also assist with student success, retention, and graduation: many sister-scholars may have similar lived experiences as their Black women undergraduate advisees and they share these stories with their advisees; therefore, this study sought to make visible and legitimate those lived experiences. Consequently, acknowledging the lived experiences of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates can expound on the scant research of how successful Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates can be at cultivating positive academic experiences for their Black women advisees, which contributes to student success, retention, and graduation – a current mission in many higher education institutions. Critical advising can also assist the sister-scholar with self-valuation, with self-definition, and with inspiring personal and social transformation in herself and in her advisees.

Theoretical Framework

This present study was qualitative, and its epistemology was social constructivism (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), using Black feminist theory as a theoretical perspective. Galvan and Galvan (2017) defined theory as a way to explain the relationship among variables with particular interest in the influence these variables have on one another. Theory makes sense of the relationship between "seemingly unrelated empirical observations" (Galvan & Galvan, 2017, p. 6). Using Black feminist theory allowed for a

demystification of the intimate and transformative dyadic conversations between Black women (Dillard, 2000). Nonetheless, epistemology is inherently ensconced in the chosen research theory because our theoretical perspective is our account and assumptions of the world and the knowledge created and derived from these perspectives (Crotty, 2003). Epistemology is defined as the process and theory of acquiring knowledge (Ghadikolaei & Sajjadi, 2015) and provides answers to questions on human reasoning, justification, and truth (Crotty, 2003; Grbich, 2007; Williams, 2015). In general, epistemology is the application of new knowledge to prior knowledge. Epistemology is seen as the gauge used to determine the legitimacy of what constitutes knowledge, providing a "philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible" (Crotty, 2003, p. 8).

Still, with the constant problematizing of dominant theories came the advent of new epistemologies and forms of knowledge research (Abel & Conant, 2012). One new form of theory was Black feminist theory. For this present study, a Black feminist epistemology allowed for an examination of how different "ways of knowing" can evoke and stimulate leadership perspectives (Dillard, 2000; Parker, 2001) among Black women within higher education. A Black feminist epistemology allowed for the Black woman's life experiences to become legitimized knowledge (Collins, 2009). Since knowledge is integral to human perceptions such as "speech, thought, and action" (Abel & Conant, 2012, p.1), knowledge is involved in the fluidity "of the triangular relation between an individual, other persons, and the world," which always contain and "presupposes indispensable forms of knowledge" (Abel & Conant, 2012, p. 1).

Epistemology, then, considers how we come to know and recognize knowledge (Popkewitz, 2014). It also considers "the rules and standards that order and classify what is seen and acted on," the responses thereto, the agents, and "the conceptions of 'self' inscribed as the agent and actor of change" (Popkewitz, 2014, p. 4). Therefore, researchers' epistemologies are constructed by their truths and their agency, which are defined by personal beliefs as well as outside dominant and covert ideals and dogmas. Nonetheless, epistemology is seen as a researcher's worldview and this worldview shapes how humans legitimize, analyze, approach, and apply "knowledge" (Creswell, 2014). This epistemological worldview consists of researchers' varied backgrounds as individuals and determines their theoretical perspective (Crotty, 2003). This perspective orients us within the world, "is concerned with the relationship between the knower and the would-be known" (Mertens, 2007, p. 215), and simultaneously guides our objective and subjective research.

Social constructivism (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was the epistemology used in this present study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), "social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (p. 8). The experiences of the individuals are varied and made meaningful through "subjective meanings" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). I looked for the intersecting complexity of meanings rather than narrowing or categorizing them since the goal was to focus on the participants' perceptions of lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview questions were broad and open-ended (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) for the aforementioned reason. The contextualized meaning-making that the individuals engaged in was subjective, "negotiated socially and historically…and formed through interaction

with others…through historical and cultural norms" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Creswell and Creswell (2018) continued:

> Researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences. The researcher's intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world. (p. 8)

These interpretive processes depend on how well I "make meaning from [my] research experience" (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 59). As such, I was engaged with the interpretive process of making meaning of experiences intersubjectively and intra-subjectively (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 59). I was therefore not a neutral observer; I was an interpretive participant (Piantanida & Garman, 2009).

The Sister-Scholar as Bricoleur

Using Black feminist theory, academic advising as a concept, and narrative inquiry as a methodology is justified through adoption of the bricoleur lens (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe, 2001). The sister-scholar as bricoleur uses various tools, strategies, and methods of materials available – similar to triangulation – as an "attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). A bricolage is something made or combined using available materials and tools – similar to a quilt or a montage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The qualitative researcher as bricoleur and "quilt-maker" "stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together" so that a mental and emotional pattern is created for an "interpretive

experience" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). Kincheloe (2001) provided further rationale for a qualitative research bricolage:

> As bricoleurs recognize the limitations of a single method, the discursive structures of one disciplinary approach, what is missed by traditional practices of validation, the historicity of certified modes of knowledge production, the inseparability of knower and known, and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience, they understand the necessity of new forms of rigor in the research process. (p. 681)

Bricolage is as much concerned with theory as it is concerned with multiple inquiry methods when engaged in qualitative research (Kincheloe, 2001/2005). Bricolage in qualitative research blends the empirical with the interpretive – acknowledging that this use of multiple methods and theories in qualitative research is not a new practice (Kincheloe, 2001).

In following with the intersectionality of the bricoleur, this present research is approached from multiple bricoleur lenses, specifically, the interpretive, methodological, critical, and narrative bricoleur lenses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe, 2001, p. 681). The "interpretive bricoleur produces a bricolage of pieced-together" experiences and theoretical perspectives tied to complex situations, in which experiences and perspectives can adapt to new meanings as the bricoleur learns new methods, strategies, and "techniques of representation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) further defined the interpretive bricoleur as a researcher that "understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting" (p. 6). The

15

methodological bricoleur performs tasks ranging from interviewing to introspection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), both tasks of which I engaged in during this present study. The critical bricoleur employs lenses such as history, philosophy, and social theory to exercise a more robust understanding and usage of qualitative research design (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 679). Finally, the "gendered, narrative bricoleur" recognizes that all researchers tell stories from the researchers' worldview (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6). For sister-scholars as bricoleurs, images, items, and experiences combine to form a textual quilt, a literary montage, a story (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Life stories and life experiences are bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Walkington (2017) provided analysis for the use of an "intersectional analytical framework" for studying Black women's experiences and this analysis is similar in description to the bricolage (p. 51). An intersectional analytical framework acknowledges the relational interaction of positionalities (Crenshaw, 1995) such as "race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, among others" (Walkington, 2017, p. 51) to the power dynamics present in various contexts, including higher education. These power dynamics are manifested through socially constructed inequalities experienced by Black women academic advisors for undergraduates and Black women undergraduate advisees, through their material reality, while working at and attending a majority-minority, 4-year, public university (Walkington, 2017). Nonetheless, the sister-scholar as a qualitative bricoleur researcher must also acknowledge that social constructions and material realities are "cross-culturally specific and historically situated," and these realities are also dependent on temporal and spatial experiences of the individual (Walkington, 2017, pp. 51-52). Different Black women will experience a similar situation differently, though there may

be underlying patterns common within their shared experiences (Collins, 1986).

Therefore, using intersecting theories and concepts in this present research allowed for a better understanding of "which patterns persist in [B]lack women's experiences" as professional academic advisors for undergraduates and by using Black feminist theory, this present research allowed for suggestions in exploring how Black women can "successfully navigate their experiences in higher education" (Walkington, 2017, p. 52).

Black Feminist Theory – 3 Themes and 5 Approaches

The social, economic, political, gendered, and racial status of Black women in higher education provides them with a unique set of experiences that offers a "different view of material reality than that of other groups"; therefore, Black women experience life differently from those not Black and not female (Collins, 1989, p. 747). These life experiences when viewed through the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2009, p. 21) can stimulate the consciousness of Black feminist pedagogics such as sister-scholars. Feminist pedagogy is defined as sets of strategies, practices, "approaches to content, and relationships grounded in critical pedagogy and feminist theory" (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 131). The sister-scholar as bricoleur also incorporates Black feminist theory in this pedagogical construct. Collins (1986) described three overarching themes in Black feminist theory: self-definition and self-valuation, interlocking oppressions, and the significance of Black women's culture (p. 14) – all three themes were covered in the present study. Collins (2009) listed five approaches to knowledge validation under a Black feminist epistemology, of which include the following:

- lived experiences as a criterion of meaning
- the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims

- the ethics of caring

- the ethic of personal accountability

- Black women as agents of knowledge (pp. 275-288)

The data analysis for this present study focused on the first, second, third, and last approaches, with all fives elements briefly described later in the second chapter. Much like Black feminist theory, feminist pedagogy has also grown as a corpus of theory in adult education. As a conceptual theory, feminist pedagogy is grounded in feminist theory; however, feminist pedagogy differs from traditional feminist theory in that, like Black feminist theory, feminist pedagogy acknowledges that women experience life and social environments differently (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). Nonetheless, feminist pedagogy advocates for social change, encourages the use of voice, personal narrative, and self-actualization, utilizes problematization, and recognizes the power dynamics within and outside of the classroom (Brookfield, 2010; Crabtree & Sapp, 2003).

When shared through stories and operationalized using dialogic, Black feminist theory should be viewed as both a "language of critique" and a "language of possibility" (Brown, 1992, p. 54; Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 132) similar to feminist pedagogy. The "language of critique" allows the Black feminist pedagogic to analyze power dynamics in society, both within and outside of academia, and to analyze the status of Black feminist pedagogy within various hierarchical constructs (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 132). For the Black feminist pedagogic, the "language of possibility" has idealistic envisioning for the future, utilizing feminist pedagogical strategies such as critical advising as a theoretical catalyst for social change and personal transformation (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 132), and as a practical catalyst for student success.

Assumptions

It was assumed that this study was not representative of all Black women professionals in a public university. It was assumed that personal opinions of the participants were accurately reflected in their responses. It was further assumed that all participants in the present study were open and honest during the interview process (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).

Limitations

This study had limitations that were beyond the researcher's control. Because of time constraints, the researcher was only be able to conduct two interviews for each participant. Ideally, the researcher would like to interview the participants over consecutive spring, summer, and fall semesters, but the research portion of the current study had to end in order to continue the study. The study was limited in that there was a small number of sister-scholars to interview at Mont University compared to non-Black women, furthering the point of the current study's significance in analyzing the lived experiences of these Black women professionals who are scant in representation. Finally, the interviews conducted were not representative of all Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. Black women may have similar lived experiences, but the interpretations of these experiences are not monolithic, and this limitation is addressed throughout the present study.

Delimitations

This study comprised of individuals "that matched the selection criteria established for the study" (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019, p. 110) which were Black women professional undergraduate academic advisors at Mont University. The study was limited

to using the researcher's colleagues, with controls being the removal of any interview questions related to the current researcher's relationship to the professional academic advisor for undergraduates. These controls were IRB approved which allowed the study to continue. The study was conducted from October 2020 – December 2020 at Mont University, a majority-minority, public, 4-year university in the southeastern region of the United States of America. The study focused on the lived experiences and resulting narratives of these Black women professional undergraduate academic advisors in higher education.

Definition of Terms

Delineating terms is an essential part of this research. There are phrases and terms noted with citations.

- *Agentic Disruptor*: Black women as agentic disruptors view themselves as change agents who are active intellectually, in academics, and in politics, and they do not view themselves as victims (Allen, 1998)

- *Conscientization*: A critical awareness where the participants realize themselves as subjects, active agents capable of thoughtful dialogue, capable of critical self-reflection, capable of transforming their community and their own way of thinking, and active in making sense of their material world (Freire, 2013)

- *Self-Definition*: The challenge to the "political knowledge-validation process" that has permeated the way Black women are perceived and stereotyped (Collins, 1986, p. 16)

- *Self-Valuation*: Self-valuation, which focuses on "the actual content of these self-definitions," places value on how Black women authenticate their own images by replacing the stereotyped images that are derived "externally" (Collins, 2009, p. 126)

- *Sister-Scholar*: A woman of color academician (Allen, 1998, p. 579)

- *Student success*: Student success is defined traditionally as successful credit attainment, retention, and degree completion (Grajek, 2017)

- *Transformative learning*: Engaging in critical pedagogy to understand current issues in order to change one's material reality (hooks, 1994, p. 67)

Research Design

This present study was a qualitative study that used Black feminist theory as a theoretical perspective, which is interpretive in nature (Crotty, 2003; hooks, 1994). The methodology chosen was narrative inquiry. The interpretive methods of achieving these methodologies were interviews, creating research texts from the interviews, and narrative thematic analysis. The sample size for the current study was three. This small sample size was "due to the depth and breadth of data collected" (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019, p. 147) in this qualitative study. This small sample size also represented the small number of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates who were not faculty advisors (six total, including myself) at Mont University out of the estimated 64 individuals who held this position. These sister-scholars have advisee caseloads ranging between 250 – 600 undergraduate students. The sampling is criterion-based (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019) – the participants chosen were Black and female. All participants were located in the

southeastern region of the United States of America. The Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates were chosen largely based on their small number in representation as it related to the current study. The Black women were invited to participate in the current study. The participants were then invited to be interviewed at an acceptable date and time. Once accepted and with consent forms signed, the data was collected using open-ended, qualitative interviews which were done in person. The data was analyzed using narrative thematic analysis, which involved interview transcriptions, field texts, analytical memos, and a qualitative codebook, with the resulting data uploaded to Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel for thematic identification, to the findings of the data which were represented through the sister-scholars' transcribed narratives.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a background of the study and the problem of the study which examined: the need for research analyzing the life experiences of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. This chapter also provided the purpose of the study, the study's research questions, the study's significance, its theoretical framework, as well as the study's assumptions, limitations, delimitations, definitions of terms, and its research design. Chapter two will provide a detailed literature review of the problem examined under study and the theory and concept for which the study was based. The literature review provides an in-depth review of Black feminist theory, as well as a historical background and critical approach to academic advising. In chapter three, the methodology that was used as a framework to answer the research questions for the present study is presented.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Higher education provides Black women varied learning experiences (Hemwell & Trachte, 2005). These experiences, when viewed as "texts," whether in a written, silent, or narrative form, "include symbols and signs that must be read" (Hemwell & Trachte, 2005, p. 79) by the Black women in higher education. The subsequent interpretations gleaned from these symbols and signs are representative of how Black women are experiencing higher education in a public university. The Black feminist lens was a theory used in this present study and its history and tenets will be discussed. But first, a brief overview of feminist standpoint theory is presented. Feminist standpoint theory advocates for solicitation of women's perspectives of their material reality, their lived experiences, and their forms of knowledge construction as these realities and experiences interact with the dominant perspective of "legitimized" (White) knowledge (Allen, 1998). This theory posits that women represent a unique "social location" that affords them a "privileged access to social phenomena" (Longino, 1993, p. 201). Nonetheless, this theory is a standpoint grounded in a "socially produced" positioning that is not necessarily available to or experienced by all women (Hennessy, 1993, p. 14). As such, like Black feminist theory, feminist standpoint theory champions the female narrative while also recognizing this narrative is not homogenous (Allen, 1998). This heterogeneity in women's stories and lived experiences is why Black women's narratives are invaluable to assessing "how oppression operates and…how women resist oppression" (Allen, 1998, p. 576). Sister-scholars such as academic advisors for undergraduates have unique ways to liberate other Black women and to resist oppression in academia. Therefore, the rest of

the chapter discusses the history of academic advising, critical advising as praxis, and how sister-scholars use critical advising for self-definition and for self-valuation.

Overview of Black Feminist Theory – BFT

The voices of Black women have been excluded historically from academia and from the research that makes up legitimized, reified research among academics (Dillard, 2000; hooks, 1994). Dominating perceptions and controlling images assumed that being Black had no gendered relations—when referring to women, people thought of White women, when referring to being Black, people thought of Black men (Crenshaw, 2003; hooks, 1994). Unfortunately, not much has changed to alter this image of a "single categorical axis" of what it means to be a woman and what it means to be Black (Crenshaw, 2003, p. 23) in America. Nonetheless, Black women and their self-definitions (Collins, 2009) are not defined easily within the strict confines of only their race and gender (Crenshaw, 1995; Jackson, 1998). An accurate representation of the interaction of race, gender, and other social circumstances as it pertains to Black women is often not on display in the larger social context (Crenshaw, 2003) in the United States of America, nor is it on display in American higher education. This "erasure of the Black female presence" (hooks, 1994, p. 121) has forced Black women to create their own spaces (Dillard, 2000; hooks, 1994) to be vocal, intellectual, vulnerable, angry, joyful, and reflective. These spaces allow for the language of Black women, used epistemologically as a way to make meaning of their experiences, to become instrumental in transforming how knowledge is produced and to legitimate what constitutes as knowledge among Black women (Dillard, 2000).

Intersectionality is one of those spaces for Black women. Intersectionality is bricolage for the sister-scholar. By definition, intersectionality allows for various theories, topics, social contexts, experiences, and people to intersect (Collins, 2019). According to Collins (2019), intersectionality is a "resistant knowledge project" where critical analysis is the scaffold for "intellectual resistance" (p. 10). Intersectionality provides oppressed individuals the theoretical ability to confront the multi-axis inequalities they experience – in effect declaring that "gender, race, ethnicity… ability, and age are not just categories" created to be more "user-friendly for academic research" (Collins, 2019, p. 10). Collins (2019) continued:

> Rather, these terms also reference important resistant knowledge traditions among subordinated peoples who oppose the social inequalities and social injustices that they experience. Such projects aim to address the deep-seated concerns of people who are subordinated within domestic and global expressions of racism, sexism, capitalism, colonialism, and similar systems of political domination and economic exploitation. Whatever the form of oppression they experience—race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, ethnicity, and nation—subordinated groups have a vested interest in resisting it.

Dillard (2000) charged that there are additional oppressions experienced by Black women that extend beyond race and gender and under the research metaphor of "research as a responsibility," which requires a relationship between the inquirer and the participants, the researcher also invites the reader to engage in the multiple ways of knowing and researching (Dillard, 2000, p. 663). Therefore, the collective thought of Black women provides a common ground for the meaningful interaction of Black women amongst

themselves and as common ground between Black women and other groups (Collins, 2009).

As such, Black feminist theory begins from the assumption that Black women in America as a collective and as intellectuals have created "independent…yet subjugated knowledges" regarding their oppression (Collins, 2009, p. 16). Collins (2009) posited that Black women have a fundamental knowledge base described as a "taken-for-granted knowledge" that manifests "from our everyday thoughts and actions," and the "consciousness of Black women may be transformed by such thought" (p. 38). Therefore, part of the Black feminist struggle is seeking reclamation of these taken-for-granted, subjugated knowledges (Collins, 2009). Reclaiming these knowledges, ideas, experiences, and stories involves not only "reinterpreting and analyzing" (Collins, 2009, p. 16), but also retelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) these knowledges, ideas, experiences, and stories. Therefore, a core feature of Black feminist theory is the ability to "clarify Black women's experiences and ideas" (Collins, 2009, p. 19).

Part of the development of Black feminist theory involves reinterpreting current theories and concepts through a Black feminist theoretical framework (Collins, 2009). Black feminist theory is developed further when it seeks the stories of Black women "who are not commonly perceived as intellectuals" (Collins, 2009, p. 17). Black intellectual women are not born, nor do they become intellectuals by becoming degreed; instead, Black intellectual women engage in Black feminist inspired intellectual work which requires a "self-conscious struggle on behalf of Black women," no matter the "social location" of the occurrences of this intellectual work (Collins, 2009, p. 18). As an interpretive theory (Crotty, 2003), Black feminist theory (BFT) seeks to critique and

challenge the "social and economic injustice" endured by Black women in America (Collins, 2009, p. 11). Black feminist theory is the product of Black female ideas and standpoints; Black women produce Black feminist theory (Collins, 1986). Black women's political and economic status provides them with a unique set of experiences that offers a "different view of material reality than that of other groups," and Black women consequently experience life differently than those who are "not Black and not female" (Collins, 1989, p. 747).

Although there may be commonalities in experiences or interpretations among Black women, these individuals still possess a unique perspective and standpoint of their own experiences and interpretations (Collins, 1986). The added uniqueness comes in the form of variables such as the varied backgrounds of "class, region, age, and sexual orientation" and ability, as well as the historical and political perspectives that further define Black women's lives (Collins, 1986, p. 16). Black feminist theory acknowledges this uniqueness of having "universal themes" of Black female experiences expressed and interpreted differently by different Black women (Collins, 1986, p. 16). These life experiences are stimulated by a "distinctive Black feminist consciousness concerning their material reality" (Collins, 1989, p. 748). Nonetheless, Black female scholarship has been largely ignored by traditional scholarship circles. However, the knowledge gained by Black women who engage in dialogic regarding race, class, and gender, and other variables provides the rationale to continue the pursuit of Black feminist theory as a "critical social theory" (Collins, 2009, p. 11). This dialectic relationship is important to highlight since BFT has its roots in Black women's oral traditions (Collins, 1986) narrated by Black women and viewed through the lived experiences of Black women.

Collins (2009) averred, Black women's "social location" in America has created unique and "heterogeneous Black feminist intellectual tradition that…I call Black feminist thought" (p. 20).

History of Black Feminist Theory

Black feminists have been a part of American history and feminist movements since U. S. slavery (Collins, 2009). However, there are two distinct American historical events that provided the guidelines for the Black feminist theory of today. The first is the advent of the Black women's club movement during the late 19th century and the second is the current BFT movement that was bolstered during the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s and is still prevalent in 2021. In describing the historical development of a need for a collective theory among Black women in America, Collins (2009) maintained:

> These ties between what one does and what one thinks illustrated by individual Black women can also characterize Black women's experiences and ideas as a group. Historically, racial segregation in housing, education, and employment fostered group commonalities that encouraged the formation of a group-based, collective standpoint. For example, the heavy concentration of U.S. Black women in domestic work coupled with racial segregation in housing and schools meant that U.S. Black women had common organizational networks that enabled them to share experiences and construct a collective body of wisdom. This collective wisdom on how to survive as U.S. Black women constituted a distinctive Black women's standpoint on gender-specific patterns of racial segregation and its accompanying economic penalties. (pp. 27-28)

Historically, BFT has been difficult to define because of its multi-layered definitions and "often contradictory meanings" (Collins, 2009, p. 24). Although Black feminists have disagreed on meanings of words such as "woman," "Black," "Black feminism," "womanism," "Afrocentric feminism," Collins (2009) believed that a more productive way to engage in BFT for commonality among Black feminists is to list six features that distinguishes Black feminist theory – features that give BFT its "distinctive contours" (p. 25), each discussed in turn.

Relevance of U. S. Black Feminist Thought

The first feature of a distinguished Black feminist theory is its relevance. Black feminism is relevant because Black women are a historically marginalized group in America (Collins, 2009). Black women in America have a "dialectical relationship" between oppression and activism, where Black feminist activism is a continuous resistance strategy against the pervasiveness of "intersecting oppressions" (Collins, 2009, p. 25). This strategy is a form of empowerment. According to Collins (2009):

> Black feminist thought aims to empower African-American women within the context of social injustice sustained by intersecting oppressions. Since Black women cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions themselves are eliminated, Black feminist thought supports broad principles of social justice that transcend U.S. Black women's particular needs. (p. 26)

Racism has been reorganized in different forms of institutionalized racism, yet this reorganization has not prevented Black women from encountering similar experiences (Collins, 2009). As such, Black women's unique experiences as being "Black and female" (Collins, 1989, p. 747; Robinson et al., 2013, p. 60) in America can invoke a

"distinctive consciousness concerning our own experiences" and concerning "society overall" (Collins, 2009, p. 27). Sister-scholars understand the connection between thought and action, yet different experiences result in "differences in perspective" (Collins, 2009, p. 26). Nonetheless, recognizing the connection between "experience and consciousness" of everyday Black women as well as the Black women intellectuals is the lifework of these "sister-scholars" (Allen, 1998, p. 579).

Common Challenges Met with Different Responses in BFT

Although Black women face similar challenges being "Black and female" (Collins, 1989, p. 747; Robinson et al., 2013, p. 60), the diverse, nuanced, and layered responses to these common challenges represents the second distinguishing feature of Black feminist theory (Collins, 2009). Therefore, Black feminists recognize also that, because of variables such as social class and social location, not all Black women have similar experiences, nor do Black women place equal value among their lived experiences (Collins, 2009). As such, no homogenous approach to Black feminism exists (Collins, 2009).

Black Feminism in Practice and in Theory

Black women's collective lived experiences and the knowledges derived from these experiences provide the third distinguishing feature of Black feminist theory (Collins, 2009). These knowledges are subjugated by the dominant groups because "self-defined standpoints can stimulate resistance" and activism (Collins, 2009, p. 33). Nonetheless, these knowledges are characterized by a dialogical relationship where the Black feminist seeks transformation, positive disruptive action, and a change in consciousness (Collins, 2009). This dialogical relationship is cultivated through telling

and retelling lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and through approaching

Black feminism from a social justice perspective.

Dialogic and the Black Female Intellectual

The fourth distinguishing feature of Black feminist theory is the relationship

between Black women and their conversations with one another, and their relationship

with research that entails Black women. Black women intellectuals are charged with

asking skilled questions and analyzing all aspects of Black womanhood to benefit all

Black women (Collins, 2009). Having an existing standpoint does not guarantee that all

Black women will find value or see the benefit or significance of this standpoint (Collins,

2009). Still, Black women intellectuals continue to use "everyday actions and

experiences" of Black women in their work (Collins, 2009, p. 37). Nonetheless, Black

women intellectuals must take care to "analyze their own social locations" in order to

continue a dialogue with the overall polity of Black women (Collins, 2009).

Black Feminism as Evolving Dynamism

Black feminism's fifth distinguishing feature is its ability to remain dynamic,

embracing change and evolution in thought as it relates to theory and practice (Collins,

2009). Regarding Black feminism's role in theory and practice, Collins (2009) posited,

"as social conditions change, so must the knowledge and practices designed to resist

them" (p. 43). These continuously changing social conditions provide the rationale for

Black feminism's continuous analysis of the "common differences" that shape "Black

womanhood" (Collins, 2009, p. 44).

Black Feminism and Human Dignity

Black feminism is a theory that advances not only the empowerment and the struggle for social justice concerning Black women, but also advances the larger, global struggle for human dignity (Collins, 2009). The fight for human dignity in America requires political participation, and American Black feminists view political participation as "a means for human empowerment rather than ends in and of themselves" (Collins, 2009, p. 46).

Key Characteristics and Definitions of Black Feminist Theory

Black women have a remarkable ability to define themselves, rejecting "controlling images" bestowed upon them by engaging in acts of resistance such as silence, coping, and transcendence (Houston & Kramarae, 1991; Shorter-Gooden, 2004) that have defined the Black female consciousness, manifesting in Black feminist theory (Collins, 2009, p. 108). Collins (1986) described three overarching themes in Black feminist theory: self-definition and self-valuation, interlocking oppressions, and the significance of Black female culture (p. 14).

Self-Definition and Self-Valuation

Collins (1986) defined self-definition as the challenge to the "political knowledge-validation process" that has permeated the way Black women are perceived and stereotyped (p. 16). Black women in America have historically used the power of self-definition for survival and for the conscious move from "victim" to "resistor" (Collins, 2009, p. 123). Collins (2009) further described the rationale for self-definition in Black feminist theory:

By insisting on self-definition, Black women question not only what has been said about African-American women but the credibility and the intentions of those possessing the power to define. When Black women define ourselves, we clearly reject the assumption that those in positions granting them the authority to interpret our reality are entitled to do so. (p. 125)

Collins (1986) compared this definition with that of self-valuation, which places value on how Black women authenticate their own images by replacing the stereotyped images that are derived "externally" (Collins, 2009, p. 126). Self-valuation is different from self-definition in that self-valuation focuses on "the actual content of these self-definitions" (Collins, 2009, p. 126). Black feminist theory values self-definition because it allows for the Black woman a reclamation of voice and image – self-valuation.

This reclamation alters the dialogue from judging an image's "technical accuracy," to rejecting the power dynamics that allow for others the presumed credibility to "externally define" the Black woman's image (Collins, 1986, p. 17; Collins, 2009, p. 126). Collins (1986) averred that the "act of insisting on Black female self-definition validates Black women's power as human subjects" (p. 17). The self-valuation concept of BFT promotes characteristics such as self-respect, self-confidence, and self-reliance as necessary elements of Black womanhood (Collins, 1986, p. 18). Self-valuation also allows for a change in the Black female consciousness, a change in self, which, when adopted by a critical mass of Black women, "can in turn foster Black women's collective empowerment" (Collins, 2009, p. 129). Nonetheless, this "changed consciousness" can also occur in the private space of the individual Black woman's consciousness (Collins, 2009, p. 129).

Interlocking Oppressions

As the second overarching theme in BFT, the "interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression" (Collins, 1986, p. 19), highlights the uniqueness that is the Black woman's experience. Being "Black and female" (Collins, 1989, p. 747; Robinson et al., 2013, p. 60) is one of many forms of intersectionality, again, defined as "particular forms of intersecting oppressions" that, when utilized by dominant groups, perpetuate various forms of injustice (Collins, 2009, p. 21). Neither Black men nor White women can accurately identify with the oppression of Black women, since Black women can neither benefit from any perceived form of masculinity to "neutralize" their blackness, nor can Black women go to a safe space of believing in equality through identifying with their whiteness (Collins, 1986).

Significance of Black Women's Culture

The third theme in Black feminist theory is the importance of recognizing and redefining Black women's culture. According to Collins (1986):

> Black feminists have not only uncovered previously unexplored areas of the Black female experience, but they have also identified concrete areas of social relations where Afro-American women create and pass on self-definitions and self-valuations essential to coping with the simultaneity of oppression they experience. (p. 21)

The belief in BFT that culture "does not arise out of nothing: it is created and modified by material conditions" (Mullings, 1986, p. 13) provides the framework for utilizing self-valuation and self-definition as tools that assist Black women in making meaning of intersectional attributes such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation (Collins, 1986, p.

22), and ability. Studying Black women's culture is significant in that it highlights the complex relationship of oppression and activism (Collins, 1986). American society and its political economy have historically shaped the subordination and consequent activism of Black women (Collins, 2009). After all, the oppressed usually know they are oppressed; however, the stories of Black women's oppression and activism are suppressed within the annals of traditional scholarship (Collins, 2009). Nonetheless, these three overarching themes create a framework for Black feminist theory (Collins, 1986).

Five Tenets of Black Feminist Epistemology

Complementing the three themes of self-definition and self-valuation, interlocking oppressions, and the significance of Black women's culture, Collins (2009) also described five main tenets of Black feminist epistemology. Epistemology "investigates the standards used to assess knowledge or why we believe what we believe to be true" (Collins, 2009, p. 270). This epistemology recognizes that BFT is not simply a combination of values and standpoints based on being Black and being a woman, this epistemology recognizes that "standpoints are rooted in real material conditions structured by social class" (Collins, 1989, p. 758). The five tenets (Collins, 2009) of Black feminist epistemology include the following, with each tenet discussed in turn:

- lived experiences as a criterion of meaning

- the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims

- the ethics of caring

- the ethic of personal accountability

- Black women as agents of knowledge

Lived Experiences as a Criterion of Meaning. Sharing lived experiences of inclusion and of alterity has been theoretically and practically beneficial for the continued collective wisdom and for the survival of Black women (Collins, 2009). Black women in turn place high value on knowledge and wisdom and attribute wisdom as a barometer for meaningful knowledge assessment (Collins, 2009). Collins (2009) declared, "knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate" (p. 276). Nonetheless, Black women use lived experiences to divide knowledge from wisdom as a key link to survival (Collins, 2009). In sum, Black women are more prone to believe an "expert" if the "expert" has "lived through the experiences" of which they claim expertise (Collins, 2009, p. 276).

The Use of Dialogue in Assessing Knowledge Claims. Dialogue allows for words to be "made flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39). Black women use dialogue with other Black women to produce "new knowledge claims" (Collins, 2009, p. 279). Collins (2009) averred that using dialogue and its element of connectedness has African heritage. Using dialogue to connect with other members of the community allows for human empowerment, self-valuation, and connection to a larger group (Collins, 2009). Dialogue is relational and interactive (Collins, 2019), and it provides a connection for the Black woman intellectual to interact within the conversation, placing myself in the analysis (Collins, 2009) – moving from observer-participant to "interpretive inquirer" (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 59).

The Ethics of Caring. Collins (2009) defined the ethics of caring as suggesting that "personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process" (pp. 281-282). It comprises three components and one is the value placed on

"individual uniqueness" (Collins, 2009, p. 282) which can contribute to a Black woman's self-valuation. The second component allows for emotions to be present and visible in dialogue – emotion conveys validity (Collins, 2009) in a narrator's story. Therefore, emotion and intellect are connected through personal experiences and conveyed through dialogue (Collins, 2009). The third component entails "developing the capacity for empathy" (Collins, 2009, p. 282) which can happen as more Black women listen to, tell, and retell (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) each other's stories.

The Ethic of Personal Accountability. Collins (2009) proposed that personal accountability requires people "to be accountable for their knowledge claims" (p. 284). A person's ethics and character are assessed when individuals are held accountable for their knowledge claims; therefore, many Black women believe it is acceptable to inquire about the personal beliefs of an individual claiming new knowledge or expertise in a topic or theory (Collins, 2009).

Black Women as Agents of Knowledge. The civil rights and social justice movements during the twentieth century provided Black women the legitimized agency of knowledge – becoming active in resisting the dominant forms of "knowledge validation processes" (Collins, 2009, p. 285). From an epistemological perspective, Black feminist theory must meet the standards of various groups, from the "ordinary" Black woman, to the Black woman intellectual, to the "dominant groups who still control schools, graduate programs, tenure processes, publication outlets, and other mechanisms that legitimate knowledge" (Collins, 2009, p. 287). Some Black women intellectuals use "Eurocentric epistemologies" when discussing Black feminism in order to advance Black feminist theory (Collins, 2009, p. 287). Nonetheless, for agentic Black women in the academy,

their marginality is "the source of both frustration and creativity" (Collins, 2009, p. 287) as they seek to reclaim and reify their stories.

These core themes and epistemologies of Black feminism manifested into Black feminist theory (Collins, 2009). Collins (2009) believed the subjectivity of Black women should be at the nexus of analysis. Therefore, Collins (2009) explored the taken-for-granted everyday knowledge of Black women, the "more specialized knowledge" of Black women intellectuals, and the experiences, "social locations," and "social conditions" that comprise both types of knowledge (Collins, 2009, p. 288).

Opportunities and Strengths of BFT

Opportunities to do the Work of BFT

Collins (2009) charged that Black feminist theory can be practiced only by Black women. Black women must find strategies and approaches to foreground their knowledge claims for the development of Black feminist theory as an autonomous theory that is non-exclusionary and non-separatist of other groups (Collins, 2009). Black feminist theory should be refined and disseminated so that other individuals from different groups "can identify points of connection that further social justice projects" (Collins, 2009, p. 41). Intersectionality (Collins, 2019) allows for opportunities to continue the work of resistance knowledge projects. Another opportunity to do the work is in higher education. The knowledge validation process of American higher education and the value higher education continues to place on positivist forms of research study unlike Black feminist theory (Collins, 2009).

Strengths of BFT

In America, Black feminist theory is an "activist response to…oppression" and this remains the overall strength of Black feminist theory (Collins, 2009, p. 25). Merriam et al. (2007) proposed that foregrounding theories such as BFT allows for "a more informed and democratic practice" (p. 243). Black feminist theory provides Black women an epistemological and theoretical common ground to find value in sharing their stories, aspirations, fears, and faiths, no matter how convergent or divergent (Collins, 2009). When used in various professions, Black feminist theory also allows the Black feminist to engage in praxis, linking theory to praxis. From a standpoint of consciousness, Black feminist theory allows for an empowerment realized and a human dignity "made visible" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 49) through storytelling, theorizing, empathizing, and caring (Collins, 2009). The six distinguishing features described above thoroughly represent the strengths of Black feminist theory and "the reasons why Black feminist thought exists at all" (Collins, 2009, p. 25). Black women have historically sought to overcome their oppression and one medium has been through dialogue with one another – this dialogue consists of both specialized and taken-for-granted knowledges. Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates also use a dyadic relationship of voices and of stories told to assist and to liberate one another through various life experiences – and for these sister-scholars, this is further "made flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39) through critical academic advising.

Brief History of Academic Advising in American Higher Education

Academic advising is defined differently on different campuses and even within departments on the same campus (Cate & Miller, 2015). Academic advising is not limited

to face-to-face sessions, but extends to virtual/online sessions, group sessions, and phone sessions (Cate & Miller, 2015). Academic advising entails more than assisting students with choosing degree appropriate coursework (Hagen, 1994; MacDonald, 2014) that will assist students with choosing a major as the "decision around which to begin organizing their life" (Crookston, 1972/1994/2009, p. 12/5/78). The definition of advising has nonetheless changed over time. According to the NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) Concept of Academic Advising (2006), academic advising consists of three elements: it consists of the "advising curriculum," the advising pedagogy, and the learning outcomes (NACADA, 2006, as cited in Cate & Miller, 2015, p. 42). Since the mission of academic advising is defined by the respective university's mission and vision, the distinct advising approaches to achieve NACADA's three elements and "encourage student success" are also defined by the collegiate institution's mission, vision, and definition of academic advising (Cate & Miller, 2015, p. 42). Although this study's focus is on current professional academic advisors for undergraduates in Mont University, historically, academic advising has been conducted by faculty and professional academic advisors, among others. Cate and Miller (2015) separated the history of academic advising into four main eras.

The Four Eras of Academic Advising

The first era of academic advising (1636 – 1870) was based on the philosophical beginnings of formal education where the choices in curriculum were limited; therefore, if students had questions, they either read for themselves, or they asked their professors (Cate & Miller, 2015). The second era, the prescriptive era (1870 – 1971), supplemented the advent of vocational programs and additional electives options; thus, formal academic

assistance was needed and an "advisor," usually a faculty member, was born (Cate &

Miller, 2015). This form of advising is authoritarian in nature: the advisor doles out

advice and the student follows the prescribed advice (Crookston, 1972/1994/2009, pp.

12/5/78). Academic advising during the third era (1972 – 2002) focused on

developmental advising, made popular by Crookston (1972/1994/2009) and Terry

O'Banion. Developmental advising is not only concerned with curriculum and vocation,

but also with facilitating student rationality, decision-making, self-awareness,

"interpersonal interactions," and problem-solving skills (Crookston, 1972/1994/2009, pp.

12/5/78). Crookston (1972/1994/2009) described the developmental advising relationship

as one where the advisor establishes the relationship at the outset regarding "who takes

the initiative, who takes responsibility, who supplies knowledge and skill and how they

are obtained and applied" (pp. 13/6/79). Developmental advising spawned a new focus on

student retention (Cate & Miller, 2015). This third era also recognized the need for

professional academic advisors.

  The need for professional academic advisors brought with it a need for the

legitimation of academic advising so that it could be recognized as a profession, which

brings the history of academic advising to its fourth (2003 – present) and current era of

advising as teaching – coined by Crookston in the 1970s, but popularized in 2003 by

Charlie Nutt, NACADA's Associate Director at the time (Cate & Miller, 2015).

Crookston (1972/1994/2009) charged that the tasks related to developmental advising are

"essentially teaching functions as well" (pp. 12/5/78). This form of academic advising

philosophy is adopted by universities and community colleges (Cate & Miller, 2015).

However, this recognition of "advising as teaching" in the fourth era has also brought

with it a critique to developmental advising as being outdated and in need of replacement by "alternative theoretical traditions" (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, p. 5). Hemwall and Trachte (1999) continued:

> We believe that phenomenology, learning theory, narrative theory, Socratic
> dialogues…and the concept of paradigms and paradigm shifts are useful notions
> for different people in different contexts for different reasons. People do not learn
> or change in one way, and it may well be that no one framework can inform good
> advising.

Academic advising is moving in valuable and prescient directions (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999) and utilizing varied frameworks for purposes of student success and personal transformation. These frameworks are also being used to promote the mission and vision of their educational institutions where there are usually statements embedded regarding not only student success, but also global citizenry (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). One of the frameworks used in this current era of academic advising is advising as praxis (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999).

Advising as Praxis

Following the theories of adult education proffered by Paulo Freire (2013), Hemwall and Trachte (1999) analyzed academic advising as an exercise in praxis. Effective transformation requires action on the part of the participant (here, the advisor and the advisee). A person must be willing to engage in "critical self-reflection" in order to analyze beliefs, assumptions, and life experiences, and to make meaning of them all (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, p. 8). This sort of learning is lifelong and expands outside of the academic institution and into the larger local and global societies. As such, this praxis

aligns academic advising with "the main mission of higher education" (Hemwall &
Trachte, 1999, p. 8). This critical dialogue can be achieved through an academic
advisor's dialectical relationship with the advisee when having various conversations that
entail the purpose of taking specific courses, conversations regarding academic choices
and consequences (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999), and conversations that assist the advisor
and advisee with finding their voices within the halls of academia and the larger society.

Socratic, Dyadic, Dialogic, & Dialectic

These dyadic and critical conversations can be Socratic in nature. Academic
advising as praxis is a dyadic relationship between two people that necessarily entails a
dialogic exchange. Hagen (1994) compared academic advising to dialectic using a
"quasi-Socratic" model that highlighted the benefits of Socratic method but not its
drawbacks (Kuhtmann, 2005, p. 45), with a benefit being critical thinking and the
drawbacks its oppressive and authoritarian nature. In general, the Socratic method
involves the advisor asking skilled questions to the advisee, as a way to lead the student
to conclusive reasoning or to further assumptions (Williams, 1993). A strictly Socratic
approach requires "advisors and advisees…to give up arguments that they cannot
rationally defend and be sure to only make arguments that are free from biases and
prejudices" (Kuhtmann, 2005, p. 37). However, Fishman (1985) charged that one
misconception of using the Socratic method is that it requires objectivity. Fishman (1985)
averred that the Socratic method does not make a distinction between objectivity,
subjectivity, facts, and values. Fishman (1985) continued that one's understanding comes
from the participants, and the questions and concepts used to gain understanding are
derived from the "person[s] in their environment" (p. 187). This active role requires

subjectivity, and this subjectivity is not a hindrance but a requirement (Fishman, 1985) for the academic advisor to engage in dialectic.

Dialectic is one way to operationalize critical thinking. In fact, dialectic is similar to critical thinking in that both test "the validity of an idea looking for holes in the arguments and for situations where assumptions do not hold" (Hagen, 1994, p. 86). Hagen continued his description of dialectic:

Dialectic is a way of examining our assumptions critically to see the ways in which they depend upon other assumptions. The goal is to cut through assumptions to get to the truly substantial foundations upon which all reasoning is based: in brief, to get to the foundations of truth, goodness, and beauty. Dialectic proceeds with questions and answers that try to discover fallacies in thinking and reasoning, fallacies, that stand in the way of right conduct because they obscure truth or goodness or justice. (p. 86)

For this study, "right conduct" is philosophical, academic, personal, and political. As active citizens, students should seek right conduct. This consists of engaging in dialogue regarding social justice and global citizenship (Puroway, 2016). Right conduct can also consist of students acknowledging the consequences that follow students' academic choices. Indeed, dialectic is viewed as an interaction between two equal "interlocutors" (Hagen, 1994, p. 87) with the advisor not seeking to outwit the advisee – as their search for "right action" is interconnected. However, according to Hagen (1994) "dialectic does not dictate right action, it merely discovers it"; nevertheless, the "beneficial dialectic" of academic advising "provides a way to discover" right action (p. 87). Nonetheless, sister-scholars as critical advisors have challenged these assertions. For these critical advisors,

using "right conduct" and knowledge and truth themselves involves more nuanced

approaches to what is right conduct, what is knowledge, and what are facts. Williams

(1993) described a feminist approach to knowledge:

> Knowledge can be understood as a social practice deeply embedded in a particular
>
> culture. Facts are made, through a process of selection and interpretation, rather
>
> than found. One's position in a social framework will have profound effects on
>
> what one knows and the path by which one comes to know it, and no social
>
> position can claim access to some undistorted truth. Knowledge is socially
>
> created, not individually discovered, and it is created through a process that
>
> involves emotion as well as reason. Finally, knowledge is a relationship in which
>
> the knower and the known can deeply affect each other's identities. (p. 1574)

With this description, Williams (1993) proposed a new strategy to using the Socratic

method – a method that could be applied to alternative epistemologies – provided there

are modifications. As such, skilled questioning can be used during critical advising of an

undergraduate Black woman advisee to assist the student in creating "knowledge she did

not have the moment before you asked the question" (Williams, 1993, p. 1574). These

questions can trigger critical reflection and allows the student to analyze and articulate

the information in another way (Williams, 1993).

When applied to academic advising, this new method implies that both advisee

and advisor can ask questions and learn from one another, which refocuses the dyadic

relationship to dialogue and allows "knowledge [to] flow in both directions" (Williams,

1993, p. 1575). The questions should be rational and emotional (Williams, 1993) –

embracing objectivity and subjectivity as knowledge bases. The strategies are not limited

to asking skilled questions, but also involve using narratives that elicit the same result which "asks the participants to reflect on and articulate" their new understanding of the subject matter (Williams, 1993, p. 1574). Nonetheless, this dialogue likewise remains critical in nature by recognizing that all shared experiences are not interpreted the same nor should they be assumed to be interpreted the same as this would dilute the diversity sought in gleaning the narratives and answers of the participants (Williams, 1993). Therefore, a "beneficial dialectic" (Hagen, 1994, p. 88) formed from a dyadic relationship during critical advising using a Black feminist framework involves a form of transformative learning that can produce student success for undergraduate advisees; it can also produce self-valuation and self-definition for sister-scholars.

Critical Advising

Critical advisors are opposed epistemologically to traditional advising which has its roots in behaviorism and positivism (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). These academic advisors are also opposed cognitively to traditional interpretations of the world and seek to decode interpretations through language and other forms of opposition (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Critical advisors have a cultural criticality and seek to analyze how certain cultures "are strategically organized to preserve the interests of some members of society at the expense of others" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, pp. 132-133). Cognitively, the critical advisor problematizes interpretations of the world done through language and culture, whereas culturally, the critical advisor acknowledges how culture perpetuates "irrationality…and social injustice" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 133). A final opposition of critical advisors is that of political opposition, an amalgamation of cognitive and cultural opposition (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). These oppositions

combine to form a part of the larger foundation for critical advisors and consciously guide their approach to academic advising. Nonetheless, in being critical, a critical advisor also knows when to advise critically, since this form of academic advising is not a panacea to advising for all adult students, nor is it an advising concept for all sister-scholars to utilize, nor a strategy that benefits all Black women advisees.

Critical Advising as Praxis

Critical advisors engage in dialogue about the scholarship of advising as a necessary step toward critical advising and as part of their own critical reflection, and this is achieved through praxis (Puroway, 2016, p. 6). Puroway (2016) defined praxis as "the dialectical unity between theory and practice based on a goal of transforming the world" (p. 5). Puroway (2016) was inspired by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator that will be discussed in greater detail later in this present study. Since Freire believed that education and advising are political acts, critical advisors necessarily "bring biases to their practice" (Puroway, 2016, p. 9). Using a Freirean-inspired approach by operationalizing dialogical interactions, critical advisors "engage in critical reflection," ask skilled questions that focus on students' lived experiences, "problematize curricula," and focus student intent toward "social justice or projects for the common good" (Puroway, 2016, p. 6). Sister-scholars as critical advisors seek to not only assist students with critical reflection, but also to assist the advisors themselves with engaging in reflective practice (Light, Cox, and Calkins, 2009). This self-reflection also assists the sister-scholar with asking skilled questions that will elicit thoughtful and self-reflective narratives from the Black woman advisee (Puroway, 2016). Both parties can then adequately "interrogate the curriculum"

47

(Puroway, 2016, p. 7), while also recognizing the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2009, p. 21) that is still present in higher education.

A sister-scholar also assists Black women undergraduates with "problematizing the curriculum" (Puroway, 2016, p. 8) by engaging in dialogue regarding class assignments, suggesting that students research and approach issues from a critical lens, while using the students' positionalities as a framework. Critical advisors also advise for the "common good" or for social justice – while simultaneously respecting the idea that all advisees are not seeking this sort of advice, some insisting instead on a prescriptive relationship (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). Nonetheless, the Freirean approach in critical academic advising is an effort to promote conscientization, defined as a critical awareness where the participants realize themselves as subjects, active agents capable of thoughtful dialogue, capable of critical self-reflection, capable of transforming their community and their own way of thinking, and active in making sense of their material world (Freire, 2013; Puroway, 2016).

Feminist Pedagogy in Academic Advising – Engaging and Humanist

Some theorists define Freire's work as feminist pedagogy (hooks, 1994). As a theoretical concept in adult education, feminist pedagogy is defined as "a set of classroom practices, teaching strategies, approaches to content, and relationships grounded in critical pedagogy and feminist theory" (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 131). Feminist pedagogics advocate for social change and they promote an engaged pedagogy that champions self-actualization in the pursuit of liberation (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 132). Similar to Black feminist theory, feminist pedagogy differs from traditional feminist theory in that feminist pedagogy acknowledges that women experience life and

social environs differently, while also acknowledging that these experiences – at times conveyed through narrative – are not seen as valuable in traditional adult education. The dominant discourse produces "experts" who choose which scholarship to legitimize (Collins, 1989, p. 752). These experts then maintain their legitimation through the majority's definition (Collins, 1989, p. 752). Feminist pedagogics charge that White theorists – male and female – have the privilege of deciding what is and what is not theoretical, in effect devaluing work that does not fit their dominant theories (hooks, 1994, pp. 62-63). Therefore, sister-scholars as feminist pedagogics seek to challenge the dominant concept of patriarchal authority – in the classroom and during the advising session:

> [Academic advising sessions] can be designed to help students and [academic advisors] alike examine relationships of power in culture, reject the dichotomy of either/or and replace it with perspectives that allow students and [academic advisors] to problematize common-sense viewpoints, discover similarities within difference, and learn to watch themselves through multiple lenses. (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 132)

Examining and problematizing experiences will allow students to remain actively engaged and interested in the teaching and learning process (Bell, 2005). The crux of this engaged pedagogy is replacing the passive and traditional form of academic advising with a form that allows for the agentic, disruptive "voices" of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates and Black women undergraduate students who seek to question social realities and social constructions. The student voice is necessary for inclusive scholarship and for the cathartic purposes of promoting agency within

students. Students should be active in their academic lives and realize that their lived experiences are valuable and that their narratives are capable of awakening their consciousness to something larger than themselves. Black women undergraduates should believe that their stories are valuable and should be shared in academia both orally and through the written word – they will then make flesh (Freire, 2001) their lived experiences.

Engaged pedagogy seeks to empower Black women professional academic advisors with holistic learning (hooks, 1994). This sister-scholar as feminist pedagogic "must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes [her] own well-being if [she] is to [advise] in a manner that empowers students" (hooks, 1994, p. 15). A way for the Black woman professional academic advisor for undergraduates to achieve this empowerment is through engaged pedagogy – showing the same vulnerability that the advisor requires of her advisees – and this can be done through skilled, dialectical interactions such as sharing personal narratives (hooks, 1994). When applied to academic advising, engaged pedagogy (hooks, 2010) is defined as:

> [Beginning] with the assumption that we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and [academic advisor]. As leaders and facilitators, [academic advisors] must discover what the students know and what they need to know. This discovery happens only if [academic advisors] are willing to engage students beyond a surface level. As [academic advisors], we can create a climate for optimal learning if we understand the level of emotional awareness and emotional intelligence in the [advising session]. That means we need to take time to assess who we are [advising]. (p. 19)

Participation in this engaged pedagogy thus requires a foundation in humanist pedagogy, using education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 2001; hooks, 1994). Freire (2013) described two stages of a humanist and liberation pedagogy of the oppressed, where the first stage consists of an unveiling of the oppressive world structures, with the oppressed committing to their transformation through praxis (Freire, 2013, p. 54). The second stage involves the transformation of the "reality of oppression," one in where pedagogy, as a process of permanent liberation, becomes familiar to all people, not just the oppressed (Freire, 2013, p. 54). Knowing this, Paulo Freire's life story requires exposition.

Paulo Freire – The Adult Educator (1921 – 1997)

Freire believed that the practice of education is an "experience in humanization" (Freire, 2001, p. 103). These experiences in education will never be neutral because most of a learner's experience in education is either from the perspective of the "dominant ideology or the interrogation of it" (Freire, 2001, p. 91). Paulo Freire recognized the relationships "among education, politics, imperialism, and liberation" (McLaren, 2000, p. 141) as inseparable from the human condition. However, he did not identify himself as an educator with ties to the movements (popular education, adult education, and nonformal education, among others) that used his work as inspiration (McLaren, 2000). Through his lifespan, Freire (1921-1997) witnessed the change in democratization as it related to globalization, liberation, and adult education. Freire (2001) believed that no teaching can occur without there being learning involved: teaching and learning are mutually inclusive. For Freire, educating adults involved the dialectical method. Freire (2001) maintained:

This is true to such an extent that I do not hesitate to say that there is no valid

teaching from which there does not emerge something learned and through which

the learner does not become capable of recreating and remaking what has been

thought. In essence, teaching that does not emerge from the experience of learning

cannot be learned by anyone. (p. 31)

To recognize the teacher and learner as synonymous is part of the humanization of the

subject matter. This humanization is seen in "problem-posing education" (Freire, 2013, p.

83). This form of education allows learners to "develop their power to perceive critically

the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves" (Freire,

2013, p. 83). Their reality is brought to life and made the subject of the learning process,

not the object (Freire, 2001).

This form of dialectical thought humanizes "action" by making it a preoccupying

act used reflectively, and reflection is essential to action (Freire, 2013). Since

humanization is "the people's vocation," it must remain alive and able to be transformed

by the oppressed who yearn for freedom, justice, and the reclamation of their humanity

(Freire, 2013, pp. 43, 44). This is because education is political, unneutral, and requires

action by all who seek a humanized education (Freire, 2013). Therefore, the teacher-

student and students-teachers engage simultaneously with learning about the world,

themselves, and their actions within it, bridging the gap between thought and actions—

this is the critical thinking that is a necessary element of the problem-posing educational

method (Freire, 2013).

For Freire (2001), part of having an education is employing the capacity to be

critical. Gottesman (2010) charged, "For Freire, being critical thus means recognizing

oppression, acting against it, doing so in solidarity with others who seek revolutionary change, and doing so continuously" (p. 381). This line of thought forms the framework that the pedagogy of the oppressed "is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressor are manifestations of dehumanization" (Freire, 2013, p. 48). Therefore, to become liberated, the oppressed, Freire (2013) maintained, must engage in a struggle for this liberation, perceiving "the reality of oppression" not as definite, but able to be transcended and therefore transformed (p. 49). However, Freire (2013) warns his readers:

> Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all people. Or to put it another way, the solution of this contradiction is born in the labor which brings into the world this new being: no longer oppressor no longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom. (p. 49)

Therefore, education must progress beyond the banking concept of education (Freire, 2013) in order to cultivate critical thinkers. The banking concept of education sees it as being an act of "depositing" (teacher/advisor) knowledge in empty reservoirs (students/advisees) (Freire, 2013). It mirrors oppressive society by allowing academic advisors to view themselves as "necessarily opposite" their students, justifying the existence of the academic advisors by considering the "absolute ignorance" of the advisees (Freire, 2013). However, thoughtful (Freire, 2001) critical thinkers believe in the "continuing transformation of reality" and in the "continuing humanization of men" (Freire, 2013, p. 92) and women.

The humanization of an oppressed peoples can be seen throughout the liberation movement. Discovering oppression by the oppressed does not necessarily lead to liberation, the same as discovering one's role as an oppressor does not necessarily lead to "solidarity with the oppressed" (Freire, 2013, p. 49). This "oppressor-oppressed contradiction" can be rectified when the oppressive situation is transformed (Freire, 2013), and the oral and written word are steps toward operationalizing this transformation. As such, Freire (2001) recognized the power of words when he posited, "words not given body (made flesh) have little or no value" (p. 39). Sister-scholars likewise recognize the power of words and their relationship to personal and professional transformation.

Sister-Scholar – The Black Feminist as Academic Advisor in Higher Education

Sister-scholars (Allen, 1998, p. 579) are representative of the insider-outsider in higher education (Collins, 1986). These Black women are insiders within higher education because of their profession, while simultaneously kept an outsider within the profession because of the power dynamics and intersecting oppressions that remain present in academia (Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013). Nonetheless, sister-scholars that choose reflective practice (Light, Cox, & Calkins, 2009) engage in critical reflection (Brookfield, 2015a) through dyadic relationships with other Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. From a "nonthreatening standpoint" (Brookfield, 2015), critical reflection involves having self-awareness to reflect deeply on the decisions and beliefs that one has (p. 15). However, at what some may view as a threatening standpoint (Brookfield, 2015), critical reflection involves a deep understanding and critique of the "power dynamics" (p. 15) that live and fester within organizations. Since higher

education is also susceptible to power dynamics and shades of otherness, despite a perceived reputation of egalitarianism (Sissel et al., 2001), higher education's hegemonic structure is uncovered during critical reflection in order to create and envision a more democratic campus (Brookfield, 2015) for the Black woman undergraduate and for the Black woman professional. Since both Black women undergraduates and Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates in higher education experience otherness on campus, sisterly scholarship (Allen, 1998) allows alterity to be confronted from a subjective and objective perspective – this confrontation can happen with stories being shared during academic advising and among the sister-scholars themselves.

Agentic Disruption – Student Success in Higher Education Through a BFT Lens

The sister-scholar, as agentic disruptor (Jackson, 1998), does not view herself as a victim, but rather a change agent who is active academically, intellectually, and politically (Jackson, 1998). Agentic, self-disruptors engage in "intense introspection" (Samit, 2015, p. 4) as they critique their beliefs, values, and aspirations – those beliefs and aspirations that may eventually lead to their self-transformation as conscious Black women, critical adult educators, active citizens, and passionate lifelong learners. These agentic disruptors create not only theoretical, but also practical and actionable "paths for success" in their lives (Jackson, 1998, p. 175) and in the lives of their undergraduate advisees. One way to practically assist Black women advisees with these paths is through advocating for student success. Student success, retention, and graduation are important priorities for all higher education institutions (HEIs). Student success should be a campus priority for all universities (Baer & Duin, 2014) and their stakeholders, including not only students and faculty, but staff, administration, and the larger community. Many

accreditation standards now include the student success model; therefore, assessing and evaluating retention and graduation rates are becoming more essential in higher education to procure funding from state and federal institutions. As previously mentioned, student success is defined traditionally as successful credit attainment, retention, and degree completion (Grajek, 2017); however, as sister-scholars, Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates assist their Black women advisees with advising that goes beyond the traditional definition of student success. Kilgore (2001) posited that generic ideas about generic learners "are irrelevant and…oppressive when recklessly applied to all kinds of people" without acknowledging a person's life experiences and positionalities (p. 53). Therefore, sister-scholars recognize that student success, to some of their Black women advisees, means successfully completing two classes a semester, as opposed to attending full-time. This is because these Black women advisees are often mothers, caregivers of some sort, heads of household, and laborers – all at the same time.

Acknowledging this unique group of learners, the guidelines set forth in some higher education institutions exclude this student – who may attend school part-time while working full-time. This further marginalizes the Black woman undergraduate already invisible to the larger campus polity. As such, in recognizing Black women undergraduates as a marginalized group in our society (Palmer, 2007), critical advising sessions attempt to foster transformative and active learning by providing a learning environment that uses the subject-centered model, which gives the subject, the Black woman, "the great thing, an independent voice" (Palmer, 2007, p. 120).

The invisible voice of a Black woman undergraduate can become liberated through critical advising. Because of the characteristics that make up a sister-scholar, the

advisees have the benefit of interacting with a Black woman who views the advisee from a holistic and humanist perspective, a sister-scholar who uses data objectively and subjectively to assist in student success, a sister-scholar who can assist them with rejecting the presumption of incompetency bestowed upon Black women by dominant groups (Brookfield, 1991; Puroway, 2016), and a sister-scholar who can assist them with navigating through the racialized and gendered waters of academia.

Chapter Summary

Black women's lived experiences, such as that of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates, are still devalued and largely ignored in higher education research. However, Collins (2009) posited that a core feature of Black feminist theory is to solicit, clarify, retell, and reclaim Black women's lived experiences, recognizing that these lived experiences can be reified and legitimated using Black feminist thought. Retelling and reclaiming their lived experiences can afford sister-scholars the power to self-define and to share their stories as they move within the margins (Collins, 1989) of academia. Sharing stories allows the Black woman's knowledge to ripen. This "ripening" can happen between two people, whether it is between two sister-scholars or between the sister-scholar and her Black woman advisee. Black feminist theory is ripened when it is used alongside other theories and concepts for a multi-faceted interpretation of Black women's material reality (Collins, 1989). Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates, as sister-scholars, use storytelling under a Black feminist theory, alongside concepts related to critical academic advising (Puroway, 2016) and feminist pedagogy (hooks, 1994) to resist oppressive forces within higher education's "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2009, p. 21).

A review of the literature highlighted the need for the voices of various Black women in higher education – Black women such as professional academic advisors for undergraduates – as these voices and stories are valuable but often overlooked (devalued) (Collins, 2009; Parker, 2001; Robinson et al., 2013) resources. These sister-scholars utilize strategies in order to build rapport with Black women advisees for their overall student success. These sister-scholars also act as change agents in countering oppression by engaging in various forms of activism and resistance, however tempered. Unfortunately, these professional voices are small in number, which is a larger issue of lack of adequate representation in a university with a large population of Black woman undergraduates. Therefore, stories of sister-scholars deserve more research and analysis in order to be reified as legitimate knowledge in higher education.

This present study buttressed literature pertaining to the lived experiences of Black women in higher education, paying particular attention to Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates and how they share their stories. This study also explored how their stories can be operationalized to promote student success and to promote personal transformation within the sister-scholar. The study's methodology is discussed in the next chapter. The next chapter will detail this study's research approach, methodology, research participants and research site, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, potential inconsistencies, and the researcher's positionality.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter two's scholarly discussion centered around Black feminist theory (BFT) and its usefulness for Black feminists to academically advise undergraduates from a critical standpoint for not only student success, but also for the personal transformation of the Black woman professional academic advisor. Using Black feminist theory (Collins, 1986) as the theoretical framework, the purpose of this study was to explore how Black women are perceiving their lived experiences in the academy of a public, 4-year, majority-minority university. These lived experiences were studied through an interpretation of sister-scholar narratives – this narrative interpretation assessed "why we believe what we believe to be true" (Collins, 2009, p. 270). Current research promotes academic advising among Black women graduate students and Black women faculty (Bertrand Jones et al., 2013), but there is scant research concerning Black women professional academic advisors for Black women undergraduate advisees and the advisor's role in not only promoting student success, retention, and graduation (Brown et al., 1999; Felder, 2010; Heinrich, 1995; Patton, 2009), but also the sister-scholar's role in engaging in self-definition and self-valuation through her profession. This present study sought to explore how the stories of Black women in higher education can be operationalized to promote not only student success, but also to promote the personal and social transformation of the Black woman professional academic advisor for undergraduates. Below are the research questions that guided the present study:

1) How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates perceiving their lived experiences in the academy of a public university?

2) How do Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates find value in their lived experiences?

3) How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates relaying their stories to other Black women in academia?

This chapter will cover narrative inquiry, the methodological approach used in this present study and why narrative inquiry was justified for this present study. Next, the chapter will describe the research site and the research participants. Then, the chapter will detail the research reliability issues, data collection including research quality such as credibility and trustworthiness, and data analysis using narrative thematic analysis. The final section of the chapter will discuss my positionalities and how these positionalities were confronted during data collection and data analysis.

Narrative Inquiry – Research Approach

This present study used narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005; Clandinin, 2016) as a research design. Much like Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I began my research from critical introspection as a sister-scholar. This self-reflective inquiry prompted me to inquire into the lived experiences of other sister-scholars. Narrative inquiry allowed my interview questions and research questions to focus on the lived experiences of Black women in higher education and how these lived experiences can be analyzed from past, present, and future perspectives inside and outside of the academy, connecting this with how academic advising can result in personal and social transformation of the advisor (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Although Clandinin (2016) made a distinction between narrative inquiry and forms of narrative analysis (p. 11), this present study, under the intersectional framework of the sister-scholar as bricoleur, used both narrative inquiry as

60

a methodology and narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) as a method. Interviews and narrative thematic analysis were the data analysis methods. The discussion of narrative in this study warrants a general definition. Narrative is defined as storytelling, where the speaker relays events in a sequence that has actions and consequences told in a way that the speaker chooses to convey to the listener (Riessman, 2008). In this present study, Clandinin's (2016) scholarship provided the framework for narrative inquiry which is defined as "a way of understanding and inquiring into experience" (p. 13). Narrative inquirers "experience" experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189), meaning, these inquirers are interested in researching lived experiences.

Therefore, narrative inquirers are interested in the human life and a way to honor "lived experience" as knowledge (Clandinin, 2016, p. 17). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) were inspired by John Dewey's (1938) philosophy of experience and education. Dewey (1938) professed a natural connection between "education and personal experience" (p. 25). Life is education and narrative inquirers learn from inquiring into life, and what is learned about life as a result of this educative inquiry then leads the narrative inquirers to a curiosity seeking to answer what it means to understand "education as experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxiv). Narrative inquiry provides an alternative to empirical research of behavior and observation that focus on statistics as data, with statistical research representing the "grand narrative, an unquestioned way of looking at things" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 22). What is more, Geiger (1986) attributed the traditional form of empirical research using strict objectivity as "neither truth nor reality for women" (p. 338). A truer reality for Black

women involves several intersectional (Crenshaw, 1995; Collins, 2019) dimensions for which I moved within and without.

3-D Narrative Inquiry Space

Narrative inquiry is a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the participant "over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction" with various environments (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Clandinin (2016) conceived a narrative space for experience using the "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality" (p. 12). This multi-dimensional framework allows the narrative inquirer to move in and out, back and forth, and positioned in place within the narrative.

Temporality. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) believed that individual and collective experiences are temporal and "experienced on a continuum" (p. 19). Therefore, temporality in narrative inquiry focuses on the "past, present, and future of people, places, things, and events under study" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 39).

Place/Spatial. Place, in narrative inquiry, refers to not only the "physical and topographical places" that people live in and continue to be shaped by, but place is also seen as shaping individuals in a metaphorical place (Clandinin, 2016, p. 42), in which place points the inquirer "back and forward, inward and outward" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 54).

Sociality. Sociality, in narrative inquiry, refers to "cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives" of "conditions under which people's experiences and events are unfolding" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 40). However, two "social conditions" not included in this list from Clandinin's analysis, but interconnected in the analysis,

nonetheless, are the racial and gendered conditions under which the Black women narrators and their narratives find themselves. This present study sought to "make flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39) Black women's narratives in Mont University.

Justification for Narrative Inquiry as a Methodology

As with all research design, a justification of narrative inquiry as a research approach is needed. Clandinin (2016) stated that this justification for narrative inquiry must be approached personally, from an individual standpoint; practically, from a pedagogical standpoint; and socially or theoretically, from a standpoint of social justice or further theoretical understanding (p. 35). Using narrative inquiry is justified in the context of the narrative inquirer using personal experiences and "tensions" as context to their personal inquiries (Clandinin, 2016, p. 36). Clandinin (2016) further explained why this personal justification is necessary in narrative inquiry:

> First, we must inquire into who we see ourselves as being, and becoming, within the inquiry. Second, without an understanding of what brings each of us to our research puzzles, we run the risk of entering into relationships without a sense of what stories we are living and telling in the research relationships. Third, without an understanding of who we are in the inquiry, we are not awake to the way we attend to the experiences of research participants. (p. 36)

The personal justification allows me to remain aware of my position "alongside" the participants (Clandinin, 2016, p. 45). In this space, I am justified to inquire into my own "lived and told stories" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 36). I then attend to my own stories and "how those stories have shifted over time" as I position myself inside and on the margins of the stories (Clandinin, 2016, p. 36).

Nonetheless, practical justifications in narrative inquiry are needed to buttress the personal justifications (Clandinin, 2016) – narrative inquiry must also be practiced. It can be practiced by Black feminists in higher education. As pedagogical practices shift and change, I must remain engaged in "making visible" the experiences had by the individuals whose lives are shaped by the pedagogical shifts (Clandinin, 2016, p. 37). Finally, theoretical justification happens when new theories are considered, and when new methods and disciplinary knowledge are shared (Clandinin, 2016) and expounded on. Social justifications for using narrative inquiry are approached theoretically and through "social action" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 37). Social justifications happen in terms of policy formation, reformation (Clandinin, 2016), and tempered, social justice initiatives such as critical advising. And when narratives can be shared, many of marginalization, the values and beliefs of the sister-scholar can then be demystified (Dillard, 2000).

Seven Steps to Narrative Inquiry

Steps are needed to achieve a narrative research design (Clandinin, 2016). Clandinin (2016) listed seven design considerations for narrative inquirers, each discussed in turn. The first step in narrative research design is to frame the research question, labeled the "research puzzle" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 42). The narrative inquiry is framed around the phenomenon (Clandinin, 2016), which in the present study, was the lived experiences of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates in a majority-minority, public, 4-year university. I did not expect particular answers to be given – I was instead searching and researching for narratives that shaped the research "puzzle" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 42). During step two, I "live[d] alongside" the participants, "in the midst" of the research relationship (Clandinin, 2016, p. 43) just as I am in the

midst of my life (Clandinin, 2016). The participant is likewise in the midst of her life (Clandinin, 2016). We are in this space together during the "inquiry relationship," accessing the past, present, and future narratives of the "midst" that shapes our lives (Clandinin, 2016, p. 43). Clandinin (2016) mentioned the midst as being in my professional and personal life, in the midst of "institutional narratives" such as graduate research, and in the midst of my "social, political, linguistic, and cultural narratives" (p. 43).

Nonetheless, two of my narratives not explicitly mentioned by Clandinin (2016) are the racial and gendered narratives occupied by Black women in the midst. However, designing the present study as a Black woman narrative inquirer allowed me to "dwell in the midst" of the participants, conscious to the "imagined temporality, sociality, and places of participants' lives" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 43). For the third step, I imagined my study through an "autobiographical narrative inquiry" and imagined myself in the "field" with the participant (Clandinin, 2016, pp. 44-45). In narrative inquiry, the "field" is defined as "an ongoing relationship inquiry space" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 45). In narrative inquiry, the "field text" is the term used for data because the information gleaned is viewed from an intersubjective standpoint and not an objective standpoint (Clandinin, 2016, p. 46). In this present study, the field texts were transcribed interviews of the participants, my autobiographical narrative inquiry, field notes (Clandinin, 2016), and analytical memos (Saldana, 2009). As I moved from the field to the field texts, two starting points were possible: the narrative inquirer listens to participant narratives and the narrative inquirer lives alongside the participants (Clandinin, 2016).

I, as a sister-scholar like my participants and therefore part of the analysis, listened to the narrative interviews while simultaneously "living alongside" the participants (Clandinin, 2016, p. 23). For this present study, the participant narratives were obtained through telling stories using the "interviews as conversations" method, with the interviews "used to compose field texts" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 45). I had read the field texts multiple times by this stage, and I kept in mind the interconnected three-dimensional space of "temporality, sociality, and place" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 50).

Nonetheless, although I "live[d] alongside" the participants, this was limited in scope because of time constraints and participant availability; therefore, I "live[d] alongside" the participants through the initial interviews, and the subsequent field texts and research texts (Clandinin, 2016, p. 45). For step four, Clandinin (2016) described a shift from the field texts to the "interim research texts" as embedded in the narrative inquiry relationship of the temporal, social, and spatial (place) dimensions (Clandinin, 2016, p. 47). Therefore, I drafted interim research texts by "further [composing] storied interpretations and negotiating the multiplicity of possible meanings" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 46). In lieu of interviewing the participants for a third time, I reviewed, encoded, decoded, and recoded (Saldana, 2009) the field texts to form the interim research texts (Clandinin, 2016). I also wrote initial narrative accounts during this fourth step. Clandinin (2016) believed that interim research texts allow for an understanding of multiple texts. These interim research texts allowed me to "make visible" the ways that the participants and I struggle to find an empirical voice in our storied lives of higher education, and this visibility is operationalized through "re-tellings and re-livings of research relationships" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 49).

The fifth step of narrative inquiry design involved shifting "from interim research texts to research texts" such as my dissertation, which is non-linear and daunting in its process, but which final product involves making the texts "visible to public audiences" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 50). No matter the audience, Clandinin (2016), nonetheless, relayed the research back to the experience:

> All research texts need to reflect temporality, sociality, and place. It is only as we attend simultaneously to all three dimensions that we can come to understand in deeper and more complex ways the experiences relevant to our research puzzles. Only through attending to all dimensions can we see the disruptions, interruptions, silences, gaps, and incoherences [*sic*] in participants' and our shared experiences. (p. 50)

Making this three-dimensional space visible to audiences allows for a demystified view (Dillard, 2000) into complex (Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 2003), lived stories of myself and of the participants (Clandinin, 2016). Therefore, I invite the audience to live their experiences "alongside" the experiences of myself and of the participants (Clandinin, 2016, p. 51). Much like narrative inquiry, this final text intends to "engage the audiences to rethink and reimagine the ways in which they practice and the ways in which they relate to others" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 51).

Step six of the narrative inquiry design involved the importance of relationships and the negotiation of these relationships during narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016). Narrative inquiry involves having a relationship with the participants that may begin as researchers and evolve as the "participants come to know and see us as people in relation with them" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 51). I maintained a similar relationship with the resulting

field texts as well so that the field texts would draw out (hooks, 1994) the "relational" within the inquiry (Clandinin, 2016; Collins, 2019). Finally, the seventh step involved narrative inquiry through researching the "lives as lived and told throughout the inquiry" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 52). I examined the composition of the lived experiences of the sister-scholars over time as they related to people and situations at particular times, places, and social locations in their lives (Clandinin, 2016). Although Clandinin (2016) did not view narrative inquiry as involving thematic analysis (p. 52), for purposes of this research study under a sister-scholar as bricoleur approach, narrative thematic analysis was used alongside narrative inquiry to retell the stories of Black women's lived experiences in higher education.

People live in stories, stories that intersect (Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 2003) and stories that comprise "who we are and are becoming" (Clandinin 2016, p. 22). The stories live with people, they grow up with people as they age, and they move with people (Clandinin, 2016) as people navigate the world and their place in it. People live, tell, and retell stories and these "stories lived and told educate the self and others" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi). Historically, Black women have lived, told, and retold stories, culturally and for survival (Collins, 2009). Presently, Black women live, tell, and retell stories, culturally and for survival (Collins, 2009). Narrative inquiry allows Black women an empirical space to live, tell, retell, and inquire further into their often-overlooked stories.

Narrative Inquiry Using Black Feminist Theory

Acknowledging this empirical space to tell stories, sister-scholars who engage in qualitative research believe that "in achieving equality, both the learning process and the

movement matter" (English & Irving. 2015, p. 3). Merriam and Simpson (2000) view

methodologies as paradigms, with one such example being Black feminist theory,

describing it as a less conventional paradigm that differs from the traditional paradigms

in how it defines what is valid and credible knowledge. Indeed, knowledge claims are of

central focus in Black feminist theory. Black feminist theory derives from the importance

of recognizing Black women's lived experiences in an effort to unearth "subjugated

knowledge" (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3). In fact, much Black feminist research is dedicated

to knowledge building and questioning "who can be a knower and what can be known"

(Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3). Black feminist theory is used to "ask new questions" that place

Black women at the center of the conversation, in effect disrupting "traditional ways of

knowing" in order to engage in new forms of meaning-making (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3).

Therefore, Black feminist theorists are committed to disrupting the traditional

forms and the "legitimized keepers" of knowledge in order to engage in multiple

standpoints (Hesse-Biber, 2012) for the purposes of self-valuation, self-definition, human

dignity, and emancipation. Hesse-Biber (2012) posited that Black feminist theory is used

when a researcher wants to "call attention to women's lived experiences of oppression as

the starting point for building knowledge" (p. 11). Black feminist theory is also used to

bring awareness to the "hierarchies of power and authority in the research process"

(Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 4) which reject certain feminist, relational theories and concepts as

being "illegitimate" and unscholarly. In this rejection, the researcher can be so removed

from the research process, in an attempt to remain objective, that she may not realize that

her delineation between the researcher and "the researched" mimics patriarchy and

domination (Hesse-Biber, 2012). In fact, part of being interpretive and reflective is

showing how the researcher's position is related to her "understanding of the object of the investigation" (Peshkin, 2000, p. 5). Clandinin (2016) likewise posited the relational aspect of narrative inquiry as the researcher "living alongside" the study:

> Thinking relationally, then, is part of thinking narratively… In narrative inquiry we intentionally come into relation with participants, and we, as inquirers, think narratively about our experiences, about our participants' experiences, and about those experiences that become visible as we live alongside, telling our own stories, hearing an other's stories, moving in and acting in the places—the contexts—in which our lives meet. We intentionally put our lives alongside an other's life. In that intentionality we are attending in relations to our own life and to others' lives, to the present time and to other times, and to this place where we meet and to other places. (pp. 23-24)

Therefore, because Black women's narratives are not self-explanatory and require use of deep interpretative methods such as narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008), both Black feminist theory and narrative inquiry allow the voice and words of the Black woman participant and the Black woman researcher to be "made flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39). Narrative inquiry allows the voice and communicative "performance" of muted and marginalized groups (Langellier, 1989, p. 243) such as Black women to be "made visible" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 49). In this present study, the personal narratives of focus are the storytelling performance, personal narrative as conversational interaction, personal narrative as a social process, and personal narrative as political praxis (Langellier, 1989). According to Langellier (1989), personal narratives are stories told in "everyday talk…about our experiences" (p. 243); therefore, the research questions for

this present study are based around a Black woman professional's lived experiences

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Collins, 2009; Langellier, 1989).

Research Site and Participants – Human Subjects

The research site was the campus of Mont University, a majority-minority, 4-year, public university in the southeastern region of the United States of America (U.S.). This site was chosen because it is where I work – the participants are my colleagues, and we work as professional academic advisor for undergraduates. The main criteria for selection were that participants were Black women professional academic advisors for degree-seeking undergraduates. The participants were Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates over the age of eighteen. The participants have all obtained at least a master's degree. The participants all have at least ten years of experience as academic advisors for undergraduates. Like me, the participants are all mothers to one child. Nonetheless, the participants were largely selected based on criteria of those who identify as U.S. Black women working as professional academic advisors for degree-seeking undergraduates at Mont University – a majority-minority, public, 4-year university. Despite Black women comprising 4,024 of 10,338 total female undergraduates at Mont University in 2019, there were only six Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates, which means there were more non-Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates in Mont University than there were Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. And because of this large lack of representation of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates, this small, unique group deserved to have their stories told and retold (Clandinin, 2016) by other sister-scholars such as myself (Allen, 1998;

Collins, 2009). The research site was needed because the focus of this present study was how Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates were experiencing higher education as these experiences can have different effects on different Black women. The small sample size was representative of why further research is needed concerning the stories of Black women in higher education.

Sample size

The sample size was three. This small sample size was representative of how Black women professionals are not well-represented in higher education. At the time of the study, there were only six Black women professional academic advisors for degree-seeking undergraduates at Mont University. The small sample size also reflects the relational methodology of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016). Much like Black feminist theory, narrative inquiry involves relationality, continuity, sociality, and an intersecting of experiences (Clandinin, 2016; Collins, 2009/2019). And narrative inquiry is the exploration of these intersecting experiences – experiences conveyed through stories (Clandinin, 2016). Because of the complexity of experience, and the length at which stories and their analyses are told and written, a small sample size allowed for a deep analysis of the various complexities of the participants' lived experiences. The *narrative*, as told and retold (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), is as much a part of the story as the *narrator*. Therefore, experiences are also phenomena for narrative inquirers; therefore, "narrative inquiry is thus methodology and phenomenon," and requires robust data analysis (Clandinin, 2016, p. 16). Since there were two interviews in at least one hour in length conducted for each participant, and narrative thematic analysis conducted, having this sample size at three still allowed for enriched and robust narrative thematic analysis.

Risk and Benefit Analysis and Justification

Participation in this study involved no more than minimal risk of harm than participants would experience in everyday life as it explored the experiences of Black women in academia, and in using interviews, this minimal risk was similar to that experienced by undergraduate academic advisors and advisees during advising sessions. Therefore, there was none to minimal risk associated with this present study. The benefits from this study have the potential to assist Black women academic advisors to engage in self-valuation (Collins, 1986) and to assist students in "connecting the curriculum" (Puroway, 2016, p. 4) of higher education to a Black woman undergraduate's life outside of academia. On a practical level, the strategies used during critical advising with Black women academic advisors have the potential benefit of equipping the undergraduate advisee with the tools needed to confront barriers and to recognize the decisions they make that either hinder or benefit their probability of student success. On a theoretical level, the advisor-participants would benefit from participating in this study by finding value in their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as Black women in academia – and by assisting their advisees in finding value in their stories – positioning the Black woman professional academic advisor for undergraduates as an active, critical, engaged (Puroway, 2016), self-valued, and self-defined (Collins, 2009) citizen.

Recruitment

The participants were recruited because they met the criteria in the selection process. I sent the prospective participants an email explaining the purpose of the study and inviting their participation. The participants were informed in the recruitment

materials that their decision not to participate would have no negative impact on their experience with me.

Consent

I obtained consent from the prospective participants by sending an email invitation along with the consent form with instructions for the prospective participants to sign and return to me. The participants were informed in the recruitment materials that their decision not to participate would have no negative impact on their relationship with me.

Subject Compensation

There were no incentives for participation in this study. The participants were asked to participate in two interviews for approximately 1-2 hours each interview. The participants were made aware in the recruitment materials that their participation was strictly voluntary and with no compensation.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

I utilized pseudonyms by assigning them to the participants and to the university. Only the primary investigator knows the actual identities of the participants. I am the primary investigator. Once the labeling of the pseudonyms to the participants was complete, the master list of participant names was destroyed. Data were stored on a data management system that was only accessible to the primary investigator using password-protected computers and password-protected storage devices. Data were stored as such until all methods of identifying the participants are eliminated. Any identifying information was removed during the coding process. The recordings will be destroyed after the dissertation has a final review.

Data Collection

For data collection, there were two open-ended, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) conducted for each participant lasting between 1.5 and 4.5 hours. The prior relationship that I had with the participants preceding the interviews allowed for more engaging interviews (Chase, 2005; deMarrais, 2004) with candid answers given (Jackson, 1998). The analysis of these interviews allowed for the demystification (Dillard, 2000) of the sister-scholar dyadic in higher education. Since this study began from my own introspection into how I make meaning of my lived experiences as a sister-scholar, the findings have necessarily involved narratives and responses from both the participants and I (Piantanida & Garman, 2009) as we moved in the midst of the 3-D narrative inquiry spaces of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2016).

Initially, the in-depth interviews were conducted and data were gathered. Brief field notes were taken during the interviews. Then, the data were reviewed and the interviews transcribed. The transcribed interviews were reviewed again with additional, in-depth field notes being recorded and kept in a qualitative codebook journal saved in Microsoft Excel. As the field texts moved to interim texts, I recorded analytical memos (Saldana, 2009) and kept them in Microsoft Excel. The data were next coded using "values-coding," which allowed for a capturing of more "subjective perspectives" (Saldana, 2009, p. 7). This interpretive approach allowed me to "filter" the data (Saldana, 2009, p. 7) using a Black feminist theoretical perspective. Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel were then used in ten steps (Osborg Ose, 2016) to the code the data. I also employed a Black feminist theoretical perspective in the qualitative codebook journal, which provided a synchronicity among codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I then

generated themes (Aronson, 1994), categories, and sub-categories (Saldana, 2009) manually and by using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel (Osborg Ose, 2016). The codes, themes, categories, and sub-categories were woven within the literature on Black feminist theory and critical advising to tell the story of the sister-scholar.

Participant Interviews

Coming to the Interview Questions. As I began to explore qualitative research, I came across Johnson's (2017) work on community-based qualitative research. Part of this research benefits from the rapport that a researcher builds with research participants (Johnson, 2017) in order to engage in more candid and in-depth interviews. Johnson (2017) discussed data collection and data analysis in chapter five and subsequently provides examples to interview questions, some of which I used verbatim, and some of which I adapted so that the questions pertained to Black women in higher education specifically. In order to distinguish how the participants felt about negotiating their identity to fit in to academia, I used Glenn's (2012) discussion on career socialization strategies used by some sister-scholars. Jackson (1998) explored the identities of sister-scholars and their development as these relate to Black women's self-definition. For the current study, candid questions (Jackson, 1998; Shorter-Gooden, 2004) seemed used most effectively with participants already known to the researcher as these participants may provide honest and self-reflective answers more willingly with another sister-scholar. I also created questions that I asked the participants about not only themselves personally and within their profession, but I also asked questions regarding how they feel about the struggles of the larger community of Black people in America. These questions

were brought together in order to develop a fuller picture of the stories and of the lived experiences of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates.

Interviews are usually open-ended in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). deMarrais (2004) defined an interview from a research perspective as one where the "researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (p. 54). There were six interviews total, two interviews per person (see Table 1 for alignment of theory and concept to interview questions). The interviews were conducted at Mont University, a majority-minority, public, 4-year university. The advisors were interviewed through web conference. The participants spent 3-4 hours participating in the study. The interview questions were qualitative, open-ended, and semi-structured (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interviews were recorded on a password-protected computer. The interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel on a password-protected computer. The interviews were then coded using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel (Osborg Ose, 2016). In this present study, for the Black woman narrative inquirer, a good rapport with the interviewees were needed for critical and engaging interviews (deMarrais, 2004; Geiger, 1986). My interview style allowed the narrator to take center stage, and it allowed me to be on the stage "in the midst" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 43) with her. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a participant may only relay events from the participant-narrator's perspective; Langellier (1989) provided space for this narrator as also a "storytelling performer" (p. 249).

It is said that one limitation of this form of data collection is the "unnatural" setting for the participant and researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); however, familiar space allowed for a more candid interview because there was a pre-existing relationship

between the participant and I (Geiger,1986). The semi-structured interviews for this

present study were recorded using a standard recording device that is password protected.

Any identifying information was destroyed after the theme identification process, and all

identifying information was removed during the coding process. The recordings will be

destroyed after the dissertation's final review is complete. All of the procedures

mentioned are associated with the present study.

Table 1

Alignment of Theory, Concept, and Interview Questions

Theory and Concept (Black Feminist Theory and Academic Advising)	Interview Questions and Research Questions *(see *Legend* at the bottom)
Black Feminist Theory (BFT)	**Research Question 1:** • Typical day: What is a typical day like for you? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87) (IQ 1) • Video camera question: If I were to follow you with a video camera during your time at home or in your job, what would I see? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87) (IQ2) • Definition question: What is your definition of being a Black woman? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87) (IQ 5) • What do you consider the daily struggles of Black women? (Jackson, 1998) (IQ 6) • How do you respond to unfair treatment? (Shorter-Gooden, 2004, p. 411) Do you accept is as fact of life, or do something about it? Do you talk to someone about it, or do you keep it to yourself? (IQ 7) • Recall a specific event: Tell me about the last time you felt ignored at this institution. (Johnson, 2017, p. 87) (IQ 8) • Recall a specific event: Tell me about the most recent time that you felt your voice was heard at this institution. What was the topic about? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87) (IQ 9) • Overall, do you feel visible on campus as someone with a valuable opinion, or have you considered this at all (before you heard this question)? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87) (IQ 10) • What are some of the problems that you see in the Black community in America? (IQ 12)

Table 1 (Continued)

Alignment of Theory, Concept, and Interview Questions

Theory and Concept (Black Feminist Theory and Academic Advising)	Interview Questions and Research Questions *(see *Legend* at the bottom)
Black Feminist Theory (BFT)	• Has an issue come up at work where you felt your White woman colleague came to your defense? Describe the situation. How did this experience make you feel? (IQ 15) • What about a situation where a White woman colleague did not come to your defense? Describe the situation. How did this experience make you feel? (IQ 16) • Have you ever had to deal with prejudice or discrimination because you are Black? Please give an example. (IQ 18) • Have you ever felt that you needed to change the way you act in order to fit in or to be accepted by White people? Please give an example. (IQ 19) • How do you cope with gender discrimination? (Shorter-Gooden, 2004, p. 414) Have you ever had to deal with discrimination because you are a woman? Please give an example. When you are around Black men, do you ever feel that you need to downplay your abilities and strengths? Please give an example. (IQ 20) • Have any of the current events in America (George Floyd's murder and subsequent protests, etc.) affected you or your family? How so? (IQ 23) • Three questions used to learn about overall coping strategies with bias and oppression (Shorter-Gooden, 2004, p. 414). How have you been affected by negative stereotypes? What are the major difficulties that you face as a Black woman? Please give an example. As a Black woman, what helps you "make it"? What helps you get through the difficult times? (IQ 24)

Table 1 (Continued)

Alignment of Theory, Concept, and Interview Questions

Theory and Concept (Black Feminist Theory and Academic Advising)	Interview Questions and Research Questions *(see *Legend* at the bottom)
Academic Advising	**Research Question 2:** • What would you like to experience during academic advising? (IQ 2) • Do you have a campus ally (allies)? How was this relationship formed? (IQ 3) • What could be done to make Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates feel more included on campus? (IQ 4) **Research Question 3:** • Referral/Recommend Question: How would you prepare a Black woman to work at Mont University? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87) (IQ 1) • What personal or professional advice would you give to a Black woman professional academic advisor for undergraduates? (IQ 2) • Has your intersectional identity (being Black and a woman) influenced your advising style with Black female undergraduate advisees? How? (IQ 3) • Are you outspoken at any of the leadership meetings for which you are a part? If so, who do you find yourself speaking on behalf of – your students, yourself, fellow staff, or any combination of these? (IQ 4) • Describe a situation ("good" or "bad") where you have had a thoughtful and realistic conversation with a Black woman undergraduate student struggling personally or academically. (IQ 5)

Note. Legend*: RQ1 – Research Question 1; RQ2 – Research Question 2; RQ3 – Research Question 3; IQ – Interview Question

Field Notes

Field notes were gathered during the qualitative interview process. Field notes were also recorded during the transcription process. The interview protocol for this present study was open-ended and semi-structured in which handwritten notes and audio recordings were recommended elements of the protocol (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this present study, this form of data collection allowed me to function as an "observer as participant [where] the role of the researcher is known" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 188). I had the advantage of being an observer-participant within the study, "living alongside" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 23) the participant with similar experiences. Because of the inherently interpretive nature of field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I engaged with the participants during their interviews, injecting my own narratives – I was answering the interviewing questions along with the sister-scholars. These responses allowed more narratives to emerge from the sister-scholars, showing vulnerability in the intimate setting. Additionally, I engaged in oral affirmation, a common tradition in the Black woman dialogic (Collins, 2009), with one example being the audible, "mm-hmm," as the narrators told their stories. These oral affirmations, and the pauses and lengths with which I uttered them, guided the response from the narrators. An "mm-hmm" uttered longer or more subtly guided the narrators in the conveyance of their stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posited, "we pick up on some participant responses by responding in certain ways" (p. 94). Utterances and how they are conveyed can elicit more or less narrative from the participant, so, as a responsible researcher (Dillard, 2000), I remained conscious of how I utilized my oral affirmations. However, I had to remain skilled at various forms of observation, as well as the theories and concepts that coincided with

these observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, I utilized field notes and I recognized that aspects of human behavior that can go unnoticed in other forms of data collection were noticed in the field notes from the qualitative interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis is a flexible method of qualitative analysis, and compatible with the constructivist epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that framed this present study. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined a theme as "capturing something important about the data in relation to the research question," forming a pattern in the data set (p. 82). Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data," while not only richly describing the data, but also by interpreting elements embedded within the research topic (p. 79). Themes are found among the "relational, continuous, and social" life experiences that Clandinin (2016) defined as fundamental to narrative inquiry (p. 17). Although content – the narrator's life experiences – is but one area of focus for narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016), for narrative thematic analysis, content is the main focus (Riessman, 2008). However, there is no one way to perform narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2018). In fact, Riessman (2018) maintained that researchers engage in this form of analysis by using their own data, epistemology, theoretical perspective, "research questions, even in definition of narrative" (p. 53).

Narrative Thematic Analysis

Narrative thematic analysis allowed me to develop themes for data interpretation (Riessman, 2008). Sampling was purposeful because generalization of the population sampled was not sought; interpretive meanings and functionality of "stories embedded in interviews" were sought (Riessman, 2018, p. 60). However, with this form of analysis there was less focus on how a narrator conveys the story, how the narrator chooses to structure the story, the proximal context that frames the story, as well as the intricacies of transcription (Riessman, 2018). Language is accepted as a resource and not a unit of inquiry (Riessman, 2018). As a result, the conversation itself is not a unit of inquiry. However, Black women have a unique way of communicating with one another and using only a narrative thematic analysis may remove some of the "beneficial dialectic" (Hagen, 1994, p. 88) that is present in Black women's dyadic conversations. Therefore, in this present study, dialogic analysis was embedded within the larger framework of narrative thematic analysis to capture what narrative thematic analysis did not (Riessman, 2018).

Dialogic Analysis. Dialogic analysis was used interpretively in this narrative analysis and it uses narrative thematic analysis for this form of interpretive inquiry (Riessman, 2018). Dialogic analysis "interrogates" how speech is produced dialogically between people and how speech is performed through narrative (Riessman, 2018, p. 105). Riessman (2018) further described how dialogic analysis helps answer questions about stories as they relate to history, society, and culture:

> Stories are social artifacts, telling us as much about society and culture as they do about a person or group. How do these contexts enter into storytelling? How is a

story coproduced in a complex choreography—in spaces between teller and

listener, speaker and setting, text and reader, and history and culture?

Dialogic/performance analysis attempts to deal with these questions, applied here

to ethnographic and interview data about identities. The investigator becomes an

active presence in the text. (p. 105)

This analysis requires of the interpretive inquirer a deep examination of the context, the

location, the sociality, and temporality of the narrative (Clandinin, 2016; Riessman,

2018). Dialogic analysis is, therefore, embedded in this present study because dialogic

analysis asks, "who, when, and why" whereas narrative thematic analysis asks, "what and

how" (Riessman, 2018, p. 105).

Approaching Narrative Thematic Analysis. During the present study's

narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008), I used the first, second, third, and fifth

approaches to knowledge validation under a theoretical framework of Black feminist

theory and they are "lived experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue to

assess knowledge claims, the ethic of caring, and Black women as agents of knowledge"

(Collins, 2009, pp. 275, 279, 285). To survive as a Black woman in the United States and

in American higher education requires a deep knowledge about power dynamics and

"intersecting oppressions" that have historically threatened a Black woman's survival and

prosperity (Collins, 2009, p. 274). According to Collins (2009), Black women respect this

deep knowledge and view this knowledge as credible. Black women use dialogue with

one another in order to develop "new knowledge claims" (Collins, 2009, p. 279). Because

of the social movements in the United States of America throughout the decades, Black

women "became legitimate agents of knowledge," with an active voice in the research validation process (Collins, 2009, p. 285).

Langellier's (1989) approach to personal narratives also provided a thoughtful addition to the narrative thematic analysis that was used for this present study. Four of the five positions on personal narrative (Langellier, 1989) were used in the present study and they are the narrator as storyteller, personal narrative as conversational interaction, personal narrative as political praxis, and personal narrative as a social process. The narrator as "performer" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 59) and storyteller involves a single speaker (Langellier, 1989). Storytelling is a way the narrator (the participant in this present study) discusses a social situation to an audience (me, in this present study) (Langellier, 1989). Narrative analysis then scholarly explains "how a story is told" (Langellier, 1989, p. 249). Sister-scholars also use storytelling with their Black women undergraduate academic advisees *and between* themselves as they engage in a "beneficial dialectic" (Hagen, 1994, p. 88). Conversational interaction in personal narrative puts the audience at the foreground with the narrator, acknowledging the personal narratives that are developed and co-constructed (Riessman, 2008) as a "system of relationships" during "everyday talk" (Langellier, 1989, p. 256). Therefore, personal narratives involving the narrator and the audience are found in everyday, ordinary conversations (Langellier, 1989) such as those that occur during critical advising and those that occur during conversations with sister-scholars.

Personal narratives have also a political storyline (Langellier, 1989). This personal narrative is political because it partly evolves "from a structure of power relations" that advances the thought of dominant groups; however, using Black feminist

thought as a theoretical framework, personal narratives told from a political standpoint have also the ability to "contest dominant meaning systems" (Langellier, 1989, pp. 267-268). In their writings that proffer the public university as a demographic and ideological reflection of the larger society (Lee & Johnson-Bailey, 2004, p. 58), Black feminist educators have long recognized that education is political (Collins, 2009; hooks, 1994). Langellier (1989) likewise posited that "narrative is political" (p. 267). Sister-scholars also recognize the politics of marginalization that occurs in higher education, contesting dominant forms by using strategies of resistance (Collins, 2019; Houston & Kramarae, 1991; Shorter-Gooden, 2004), with one such strategy being the sharing of stories with other Black women in higher education. Sister-scholars as narrative inquirers are focused on retelling those stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Finally, as a social process, personal narratives focus on the storytelling embedded in "particular speech communities" where the style of discourse among a particular culture is analyzed (Langellier, 1989, p. 261). The oral traditions of Black women are at the root of understanding lived experiences as a criterion of meaning in Black feminist theory (Collins, 1989) – and these oral traditions are used in the dyadic, dialectical relationship of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates amongst themselves in everyday talk, and between them and the Black woman undergraduate advisee during critical advising.

The emergent codes that arose from the field texts and interim texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) were then used to represent the major findings for this present study; for narrative thematic analysis, the emergent themes derived from the coding were interconnected with the narratives of the participants for further analysis (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). This present study used narrative passages of the participants

(Clandinin, 2016; Riessman, 2008) from a values coding perspective that acknowledged

my subjectivity (Saldana, 2009). The following section provides a detailed overview of

the five steps for this present data analysis.

Five Steps of Data Analysis for Present Study

Of the five steps, the first step in this qualitative data analysis was to "organize

and prepare" data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 193). In step 2, the data was visually

scanned: the interviews were transcribed, the field notes were organized and reviewed,

and the data was arranged according to the information that was gathered (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). I kept two journals, a qualitative codebook journal and a personal

dissertation journal. I kept a qualitative codebook journal during the data analysis

because transcriptions and field texts gleaned from a qualitative codebook journal are key

elements of narrative inquiry and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clandinin,

2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative codebook journal was saved in

Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Osborg Ose, 2016). I

also recorded personal impressions gathered during the data analysis and this made up the

personal dissertation journal that I used for coding emergent themes. The overall data was

aggregated into themes as they emerged from the data. I became "immersed" in the data

(Braun and Clarke, 2006). I then read and analyzed the data from a larger lens to review

what the information told me (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This allowed me to deeply

review my impressions during step three (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Step three involved data coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Saldana (2009)

defined a "code" in qualitative inquiry as "most often a word or short phrase that

88

symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute

for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). The main content and essence of a

datum is represented by a "code" (Saldana, 2009, p. 3). I employed values-coding "to

capture and label subjective perspectives" (Saldana, 2009, p. 7). Specifically, using

Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel (Osborg Ose, 2016), I analyzed the codes and

emergent themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) by employing ten steps (Osborg Ose,

2016):

1. Collect the data.

2. Transcribe the audio files.

3. Transfer the text from Word to Excel.

4. Prepare the Excel document for coding.

5. Code in Excel.

6. Prepare the coded interviews for sorting.

7. Sort the data.

8. Transfer quotes and references from Excel and Word.

9. Sort the text into a logical structure based on the coding.

10. Analyze the data. (p. 149)

During data collection and during data analysis, I recorded analytical memos in the

qualitative codebook journal in Microsoft Word and employed values coding (Saldana,

2009) from a Black feminist theoretical perspective, which defined codes and allowed for

a synchronicity among codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Saldana (2009) averred that

in interpretive inquiry, coding is subjective because the researcher "filters" how the

researcher digests and subsequently codes the data (p. 7). Acknowledging that coding

schemes are not static and evolved as I continued to code and analyze the data (Saldana, 2009), the qualitative codebook journal evolved over time dependent on "the information learned during the analysis" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 197).

The fourth step of data analysis for the present study involved description and theme generation. I identified and analyzed the themes generated (Aronson, 1994) manually and by using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel (Osborg Ose, 2016). I used coding to describe the participants, the settings, and additional observable data gleaned during transcription, which is useful in narrative inquiry (Aronson, 1994; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194). I used emerging themes, which derives codes from the emerged participant data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The final step was for me to "formulate theme statements to develop a story line," which, when woven with the literature and "interwoven with the findings," constructed a story that "stands with merit" (Aronson, 1994, para. 9). Saldana (2009) suggested that, through recoding and recategorizing, coding moves from codes to categories to theory. Therefore, a well-defined coding process, a theory, and a developed story line are needed to assist the audience with "understanding…[the] motivation of the interviewer" (Aronson, 1994, para. 9).

Trustworthiness/Credibility

The steps that were conducted were done to check my accuracy and the validity of my findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In qualitative research, these validated findings are not similar to reliability or generalizability, nor does validity carry the "same connotations" in qualitative research that it does in quantitative research (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018, p. 199). Therefore, qualitative researchers must list the steps taken to

achieve trustworthiness with specificity. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described several methods to achieve validity in qualitative research, some of which were used in the present study and they are "qualitative validity, using multiple validity procedures, qualitative reliability" (pp. 199-202).

Using Multiple Validity Procedures

I identified the strategies that were used to check for validity. Creswell and Creswell (2018) posited that multiple approaches are recommended in order to enhance validation. For this present study, the multiple validity procedures that were used were triangulation, robust description, acknowledging and reflecting on researcher bias, and presenting "discrepant information" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 200-201). Triangulation was used when the interviews and field notes were examined for the "evidence" they produced and this was used to justify the themes derived from the examination (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). Robust descriptions of the evidence were used to bring the audience "alongside" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 23) myself and the participants' "shared experiences" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). The potential bias that all researchers bring to their study was addressed to create an "honest narrative" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200) with the audience. Using researcher reflexivity and presenting an honest account of the researcher's interpretations that are shaped by my positionality was clarified for further validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A final procedure that was used for validity was presenting information that may "run counter to the themes," which also related to the honest narrative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 201) that I adhered to in this present study.

Qualitative Reliability

Qualitative researchers should ensure their validation procedures are reliable and stable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I checked transcripts to ensure they were error-free (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I ensured a consistent definition of the codes that emerged; I journaled in a qualitative codebook journal (using Microsoft Word) to ensure consistency in definition (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and I used Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel to cross-check codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) recorded in the qualitative codebook journal.

Potential Inconsistencies. I prepared for potential inconsistencies using Braun and Clarke's (2006) directives for how to avoid "potential pitfalls" when using thematic analysis (p. 94). One potential pitfall was not analyzing the data as described; I ensured to avoid this pitfall by not only extracting pertinent analytic points of data, but I also "ma[d]e sense of the data" by explaining to the audience what the data meant (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 94). A second pitfall that I avoided was using the research questions as themes – if this was done, no analysis would have been done to "make sense of the patterns of responses" (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 94). I ensured the themes were sound and were not overlapping, so as to provide a strong and convincing analysis – to provide otherwise would have been the third pitfall described by Braun and Clarke (2006). A fourth pitfall I avoided was when the analytic claims contradicted or if the claims were unsupported by the data – I avoided this pitfall by ensuring the interpretations in the present study were "consistent with the data extracts" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 95). To avoid the fifth pitfall, in this present study, the "interpretations of the data" remained "consistent with the theoretical framework" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 95). Finally, in

this present study, the theoretical assumptions and the rationale thereto were explained in order to avoid this last pitfall and potential inconsistency in this data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Positionality

Over the years as I have reflected on my current role as an academic advisor for undergraduates, I have often wondered how I can, as a Black woman adult educator, create transformative learning experiences (hooks, 1994) in my life and in the lives of my advisees. My rumination involved my own positionality, my teaching philosophies, my interaction with administration, students, faculty, and staff (Brown, Cervero, & Johnson-Bailey, 2000), and my credibility with those who question my competence (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Piantanida and Garman (2009) defined positionality as my "gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status…professional role, and other attributes of position or perspective that might influence how the meaning of events is construed" (p. 58). I have "intersecting 'positions'" that structure my experiences (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 240), my epistemology, and my theoretical perspective.

I am a Black woman. I am a mother. I am a daughter, granddaughter, and caregiver number two. I am a non-traditional family woman who comes from a traditional American family. I am a Black woman professional who works at a public four-year university. I am an academic advisor for undergraduates. I am a Black feminist. I am a sister-scholar. And I will provide a brief narrative of my intersecting positionalities in turn.

A Black Woman

I asked my participants to define what a Black woman means to them. Being a Black woman means different things to different Black women and this definition is based on each Black woman's lived experiences. Black women are not a monolithic group. Even this small sample of Black women's lived experiences encompassed answers across the spectrum of any preconceived notions of how Black women are experiencing their lives inside and outside of higher education. Therefore, I used the voices of my participants in Chapter four, and I use some of my narratives below to give an anecdotal definition of a Black woman as I know it – in remaining critical, my definition is yet unfinished.

A Mother

I became pregnant with my 21-year-old son at an early age. I was nineteen when I became pregnant and twenty years old when I gave birth. I realized when I was about five months pregnant that I would be a single mother. I remember the day I realized this. My mother came and sat beside me as I was crying and said, "Dry up your tears. You can raise this baby on your own. You will pick up, move forward, and not look back. We are here to help you." The "we" was her and my dad. I have not "looked back" since. As scared as I was, one thing I knew I could do was work. And I kept working and I have been working, with a couple of bouts of brief joblessness in between, ever since. But with this work came a sacrifice. I missed out on raising my son during his most formative years. Thank goodness for my maternal grandmother who happily babysat her great-grandson. And because I was working in retail at low-income jobs with required weekend hours, I missed out on even more of my son's life.

Then I had the audacity to re-enroll in college. I felt it was the only way out for my son and I – I had so many coworkers to encourage me to go back to school, but I did not re-enroll until I was ready. That readiness took nearly ten years for me to muster into action. I was ready when I felt the glass ceiling crack above my head, and I knew then there was nowhere else to advance within the company. But others advanced. Still, I thought, how could I raise my son in a more stable position? What will happen to our relationship once I go to work in the daytime and attend school in the evenings? Will he understand that the sacrifice I have made is because of the systemic racism that is prevalent in the employee-employer relationship? According to general government statistics, I was one of the working poor. Yet, I worked full-time – as much as allowed, particularly once the 2008 recession hit the retail industry. I had such difficult decisions to make and at such a young age. But I made them and a few years after 2008 I witnessed my son graduate high school.

A Daughter, A Granddaughter, and Caregiver Number Two

I am a mommy's girl and a daddy's girl and I have always been a curious and sentimental individual. My mom reminds me to this day how, at five years old, I sat in between her and her best friend talking, and I interjected, "It's really hard being a parent, isn't it?" They were stunned that I understood the conversation and the prosody (Riessman, 2008) enveloped in their dialogue. Now my mother is one of my best friends. We talk multiple times a day. She is one of the kindest people that I have ever met; she is just like her mother. My dad is the first man that I ever loved. He not only raised me, his "baby-girl," to be proud of my ethnicity, but he also raised me and my brothers to be aware of current events. As a young girl, there were political events that I recall watching

on television (the end of Nelson Mandela's incarceration comes to mind, vividly) because my dad ensured this event played on every television in the house. Fast forward years later as I re-entered college and my dad and I would spend hours talking about everything from politics, to constellations, to the origins of man.

My grandparents were the best grandparents I could have. I grew up with both my paternal and maternal grandparents, though my grandfathers passed away while I was still relatively young. My paternal grandfather was so kind and soft-spoken, as was my maternal grandfather-he was kind in a quiet way. Both men loved to fish and both men took pride in taking care of their families. As modest as I am, I am proud to say that my paternal grandmother called me the apple of her eye at one family reunion when I was younger – we were born on the same day and we used to spend our birthday together. That is before I thought that hanging out with her was not so cool. As I grew up, we grew apart, and I now carry a loneliness on our birthday since she passed away. I was very close to my maternal grandmother – if our family was the village, she was more than the leader, she was the water we needed to quench our familial soul. She fed my love of lifelong learning at an early age. When I was a child, she would drive me to the neighborhood book-mobile every week and I would finish the books by the time we made it back to my grandparents' home. She bought me *Highlights* books. I needed more. I discovered the encyclopedias on the bookshelf under the fish tank. I read them all. She bought the new editions every time the "magazine man" came to the door.

I grew up close to her. I laughed with her. I cried with her when she shared with me how much she missed her mother and her husband when they passed away. She was the only child. She would not talk about the Great Depression when I asked. It was too

difficult for her. We cried together. Her death a few years ago has affected me, my mother, my son, my entire family, very deeply. Although I am not a materialistic person in the base sense of the word – I consider myself sentimental – one of the items of my maternal grandmother's that I requested was the quilt made when I was a little girl. My cousin had sewn together a quilt with pictures of many of our family members. I was gifted the quilt by my family. It is a tangible patchwork of the loving family her and my maternal grandfather put together. The quilt was sewn with stories.

My role as caregiver number two occurred in December 2018 and continues to this day. I am caregiver number two assisting my mother, caregiver number one, who is caring for my dad after he suffered his most debilitating stroke to date. This role is not a burden, but as someone told me, a privilege to be able to care for your parents. I am there for them both whenever they need me. Still, I have suffered, and I have been amazed and heartbroken at seeing my dad suffer, and rehabilitate, and have a setback, and have a day of laughter. I admit that I suffer selfishly as I am too grateful that he is alive. I am very grateful. And I am human. So, I must accept that his speech will never be the same – the hours we used to talk are no more. But we still have language. We still have dialogue. He speaks as best he can – and I am grateful to be able to listen and talk with him.

A Non-Traditional Family Woman Spawned from a Traditional Family

I recognized injustice at an early age. My mom often called me a "little militant." I recognized injustice as it concerned women and Black people and Black women as a unique group of people burdened by injustice (Crenshaw, 2003). Everyone in my family expected me to go to law school, but my life's events led me down a more non-traditional trajectory than what was expected of me. I graduated high school and soon became a

college dropout, and I became pregnant with my son soon after dropping out. I worked. It took me a decade to go back to college. Marriage did not come along with my baby carriage. Nonetheless, I was raised by my parents who are still married – 46 years in 2021. Both of my parents were raised by their parents, all married at early ages and until death did them part. Although I am comfortable with my station in life, I wonder if I have disappointed my parents by not being married since I am their only daughter. I dreamed of earning degrees when I grew up; I did not dream of a wedding day. I mentioned to my parents several months ago, "I don't think I will ever get married," and my dad formed his speech well enough to agree by saying, "Nope!" At least we are all on the same page.

A Black Woman Professional Academic Advisor for Undergraduates

I began working at Mont University as a regular student worker making minimum wage. I was fortunate enough to procure a graduate assistantship when I entered graduate school. During the summer months when there were no graduate assistantships, I continued working as a regular student worker. As a young woman with a teenager, I struggled. I had tough decisions to make – I sacrificed working full-time in order to pursue my studies. I was placing my bet on having an education that would assist me in procuring a full-time position to begin my career in higher education. After a while I thought I should not gamble because I was denied many times to work full-time at Mont University. I felt so dejected. I knew that I was capable of performing well in every position for which I applied. But there was that nagging feeling that I had of a presumption of incompetence (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). I was about to stop applying for positions when an academic advising position appeared. My mother encouraged me to apply. I did. I was hired in the summer of 2016.

98

Something significant was happening to me as a learner because, as an academic advisor, I had a different level of access to databases, which in turn required me to learn these databases. I also had to acclimate myself to learning about the different departments on campus and how I was to utilize each one for myself and for the benefit of my advisees. Speaking of advisees, I had nearly two hundred and counting, which meant that I had to in turn learn the personality and academic background of each of my advisees in order to provide a holistic advising experience. I also had to learn about the personalities of my coworkers and the daily office routine. I had many things to learn.

Part of the learning experience that made this process so meaningful was learning that I could invoke a change in society through adult development. My philosophy for academic advising is a Freirean-inspired approach of critical advising which seeks, through praxis, "a dialectical unity between theory and practice with the goal of transforming the world" (Puroway, 2016, p. 4). As a doctoral student immersed in the theories of higher and adult education, being hired as an academic advisor felt like the beginnings of how I would be operationalizing the theories that I learned so that, as an academic advisor, I would be able to move from theory to practice in promoting agency and conscientization within my advisees as well as promoting my own agency and personal transformation. As an agentic disruptor (Jackson, 1998), critical advising is my way of displaying a "tempered radicalism" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 586).

The "tempered radical" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 586) is a thoughtful disruptor. Kezar & Lester (2011) described this leader as one who utilizes a "tempered, incremental, and evolutionary change, which is likely more successful than radical

approaches in institutionalized settings" (p. 26). Meyerson and Scully (1995) defined

tempered radicals:

> [These] individuals can effect change, even radical change, and still enjoy
>
> fulfilling, productive, authentic careers. They work within mainstream
>
> organizations and professions and want also to transform them. We call these
>
> individuals "tempered radicals" and the process they enact "tempered radicalism."
>
> These individuals can be called "radicals" because they challenge the status quo,
>
> both through their intentional acts and also just by being who they are, people
>
> who do not fit perfectly. Change often comes from the margins of an
>
> organization, borne by those who do not fit well. (p. 586)

I seek to disrupt the status quo within the current system of higher education, but not in a

way that estranges the overall campus corpus. Yet, part of my tempered radicalism is of

feminist and humanist persuasion, as I am committed to "eradicating gender, race, and

class injustices" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 587) within the campus polity and within

the community-at-large. I want to possess the skills to walk this fine, tempered line in

disrupting the status quo with informed and "passionate concern" (Meyerson & Scully,

1995, p. 587). I will call this "good disruption."

I seek to promote this "disruptive agency" because my undergraduate advisees, if

they have not realized it already, may learn that education is a political act (Puroway,

2016), much like many other facets of their lives. However, not all of my students

experience the barriers to education and to their social position within society. Therefore,

I have to meet each student where the student is (Horton, 1998) in order to promote

agency at different levels because "developmental progress is shaped contextually and

interpreted subjectively" (Rossiter, 1999, p. 66). As a professional academic advisor for undergraduates, I am a conduit to students' engagement on campus. I have knowledge that I enjoy sharing with my students, some of this knowledge is through academic advising, and some of this knowledge I learned as a student, a Black woman, a Black feminist. Learning is cyclical and students, faculty, and staff should appreciate that we can all learn from one another because learning and knowledge should not be, or *remain*, hierarchical in their dissemination.

A Black Feminist

This brings me back to the questions of what is knowledge, who is allowed to legitimate knowledge, and to whom is this knowledge meaningful? As a Black woman critical researcher, I read texts, evaluate speech, and see images with these questions in mind. One night as I sat in a political science course while working on my master's degree, the professor brought up an event that happened a few months prior that jibed with the week's classroom content. Michael Brown had just been murdered in Ferguson, Indiana and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was burgeoning. Something was happening. I thought it was finally my time to have a voice in the class as a Black woman pursuing a liberal studies master's degree in a classroom full of political science wonks. I raised my hand. The professor called on me. I was two sentences into my 3-D narrative inquiry space when the professor interrupted me and said, "No. You are not going deep enough." She continued with the point she wanted to make to the class. As I quickly reminded myself to stop staring at her, I turned and looked around at the entire class – each individual face of the non-Black class – and they all looked as stunned as I did. Yet no one said anything. I said nothing. I was the only Black *person* in the class. Yet I said

nothing. I felt hostage to someone, a White woman who obviously cared nothing about what I had to say, who had my grade in her hand. But I was livid.

For the remainder of the semester, I engaged in coping strategies used by some Black women who are exposed to unfair treatment and they are avoidance and silence (Collins, 2009; Houston & Kramarae, 1991; Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Although we sat beside one another in a roundtable setting, I avoided the professor through my silence as I only spoke when asked a question – and my answers were succinct. I would prove her wrong through my final paper – then she will see how "deep" I can get, I thought. I earned an "A" for the final paper and one of her comments was, "You pulled it off!" She sounded surprised. I said nothing. I could not wait for the semester to end. Why was my knowledge of being Black in America not valued in her classroom? If no other time to let me speak, that was the time, and she failed as an educator. Apparently, my knowledge was not meaningful – could my ethnicity alone not provide the credibility needed? For many in the room, probably not, which is why *my story* was important – I am a Black mother to a young Black man, so I could have provided insight into the fears Black women have for their Black sons. However, my knowledge was devalued in front of a room of my "peers." Yet Williams (1993) charged that knowledge has elements of reason and emotion and this relationship with knowledge, the "knower and the known can deeply affect each other's identities" (p. 1574). My knowledge is legitimated through my lived experiences.

A Sister-Scholar

Like most doctoral students working full-time, I have lived a double life. I am a professional adult educator by day and most evenings, and I am a student and adjunct

instructor at night, and every weekend. I teach and I learn. I am still the curious person that I was at five years old. I have immersed myself in theories and through my profession I have attempted to operationalize these theories into practice. Nonetheless, a sister-scholar (Allen, 1998) is both an insider and an outsider within higher education (Collins, 1986). Although after years of trying and finally being hired full-time as a professional within higher education, as an insider-outsider professional I am now a witness to discriminatory practices in promotions and other intersectional oppressions that occur in academia (Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013). And as a tempered radical (Meyerson & Scully, 1995), I engage in sister-scholarship (Allen, 1998) and critical advising (Puroway, 2016) in order to participate in "good disruption," and in order to uncover the stories of Black women that reveal the power dynamics and shades of otherness still prevalent in higher education.

Much like Clandinin (2016), I had to ask, "Who am I in the narrative inquiry?" (p. 81). Using "self as instrument of inquiry" I was able to analyze the data because of the "capacity to resonate" experiences I have with my research participants (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 66). I was interactive in the narrative inquiry, examining my voice through the voice of my participants (Chase, 2005). This is a vulnerable position to take (Chase, 2005). Nonetheless, this and other narrative strategies are implemented in qualitative research because:

> Researchers need to understand themselves if they are to understand how they interpret narrators' stories and that readers need to understand researchers' stories (about their intellectual and personal relationships with narrators as well as with

the cultural phenomena at hand) if readers are to understand narrators' stories.

(Chase, 2005, p. 666)

Therefore, thinking narratively, I had to identify where I was in the phenomenon so that the research questions "became clearer," allowing for the personal, practical, and social justification of the study (Clandinin, 2016, p. 81). In this qualitative study, I was an "interpretive inquirer," gathering data regarding participant experiences; I was also an "instrument of inquiry" because of the close relationship I needed with the data in order to experience and to critically reflect on the "phenomenon under investigation" (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 59). For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the narrative inquirer should embrace positionality not as a loss of objectivity, but as necessary for the close relationships needed in narrative inquiry. In any event, the field texts and how they are transformed into interim and eventual research texts prevent the "possible loss of objectivity" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 82).

Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed this study's research approach, methodology, research participants and research site, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, potential inconsistencies, and the researcher's positionality. This study used a qualitative, narrative inquiry research design and semi-structured narrative interviews to collect data. The data was analyzed and interpreted using manual and computerized coding methods and narrative thematic analysis in order to "make flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39) the participants' lived experiences. Data reliability and trustworthiness were buttressed using triangulation, robust description, reflecting on researcher bias, and presenting "discrepant information" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 200-201).

Chapter 4

Findings

Critical, reflective professionals such as Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates have unique lived experiences that can prove valuable to the campus polity and to the sister-scholars. However, not only are their stories devalued and under-researched because there are so few Black women academic advisors for undergraduates for which to derive research at Mont University, but there is also scant research in how these sister-scholars engage in self-definition and self-valuation through academic advising. The purpose of this study was to explore how Black women are perceiving their lived experiences in a public university, as well as exploring how sister-scholars can operationalize their stories to promote student success and to legitimate their lived experiences. The participants, Joy, Lilly, and Asha, have all been employed as academic advisors for undergraduates for at least ten years each. I used narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016) as a methodology and narrative thematic analysis as a method (Riessman, 2008). Themes were developed and allowed to emerge using narrative thematic analysis. The themes were found in continuous, social, and relational lived experiences of the participants and these varied experiences are fundamental to narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016). Narrative thematic analysis allowed me to interpret the data in which I discovered "stories embedded in [the] interviews" (Riessman, 2018, p. 60). The dialogic analysis that was embedded in the narrative thematic analysis allowed me to interpret stories that related to politics, society, and culture (Riessman, 2018).

This chapter presents the themes and categories that emerged from the data, using passages from the participants Joy [Participant 1], Lilly, [Participant 2], and Asha

[Participant 3]. Themes one and two describe how the sister-scholars are perceiving their lived experiences at Mont University. Themes three and four represent how the sister-scholars find value in their lived experiences. Theme five describes how the sister-scholars relay their stories to other Black women. As the interpretive inquirer (Piantanida & Garman, 2009), my narratives as a sister-scholar are also interwoven in parts of the narratives of Joy, Lilly, and Asha as I moved "in the midst" alongside them (Clandinin, 2016, p. 23). The themes and categories are presented in the subsequent paragraphs (see Table 2). The five themes generated were (1) Academic firefighters: Sister-scholars as the problem-solvers, (2) The sister-scholar as devalued professional, (3) Advocacy and mentorship, (4) The Black body and the Black mind yearning to be free, and (5) Sister-scholar as reflective professional. Finally, a summary of the findings will be presented.

Table 2

Emergent Themes and Categories from Participant Interviews

1. Theme: Academic Firefighters: Sister-scholars as the problem-solvers
a. Category: The stress of fighting academic fires
b. Category: Academic advising support
2. Theme: The Sister-Scholar as Devalued Professional
a. Category: Disrespect – Essential yet invisible
b. Category: Dehumanization in work
c. Category: Controlling images and self-definition
3. Theme: Advocacy and mentorship
a. Category: Sister-scholars as student advocates
b. Category: Sister-scholars need advocates and mentors too
4. Theme: The Black body and the Black mind yearning to be free
a. Category: The George Floyd effect
b. Category: Tempered radicalism
5. Theme: Sister-scholar as reflective professional
a. Category: Black womanhood and work
b. Category: Finding value in work

A Sister-scholar's Perception of Lived Experiences

Race, gender, class, and other intersectional categories are not often represented accurately in higher education and in other social contexts (Crenshaw, 2003). Nonetheless, socially constructed power systems of the race, gender, class triad are maintained and reified through their relational interaction (Collins, 2019). Therefore, sister-scholars perceive their lived experiences as they relate to and intersect with one another, sometimes with degrees of variability (Collins, 2019). Two themes emerged that represented the "class" in the triad of race, gender, and class knowledge projects (Collins, 2019) and these are (1) Academic Firefighters: Sister-scholars as the Problem-solvers, and (2) The Sister-scholar as Devalued Professional (see Table 2). Sister-scholars are a class of devalued professionals – the academic proletariats – in the higher education hierarchy that consists of administration at the top of the pyramid, faculty and students in the middle, and staff on the bottom.

Nonetheless, the first theme that emerged was the sister-scholar as academic firefighter and problem-solver, quietly keeping the city – the university – free from four-alarm academic emergencies every day. The stories of Black women can have similarities, but their stories are not homogenous (Allen, 1998), and the participants' narratives in this study were no exception. Although there were only three participants – Joy, Lilly, and Asha – their perceptions of their lived experiences provided three unique perspectives. Again, several sub-categories emerged from the data analysis and are interwoven throughout each category. Each theme and its categories are discussed in turn.

Theme 1: Academic Firefighters: Sister-scholars as the Problem-solvers

I used the term, "academic firefighters," because – as with all professional academic advisors for undergraduates – sister-scholars "put out fires" all day, with some fires taking longer to extinguish than others. As one of their tasks, sister-scholars solve student issues. Problem-solving is the nature of the profession. The issues that arise can span from a few minutes to several hours, days, weeks, and months. There are times when the issues provide great stress to the sister-scholar; therefore, support for professional undergraduate academic advisors is needed from deans [in this study, for anonymity, associate and assistant deans are also considered under the term "deans"], chairs of departments, faculty, other academic advisors, and other sister-scholars. It must also be acknowledged that some of these support systems are also factors in a sister-scholar's stress.

Category: The Stress of Fighting Academic Fires. Sister-scholars are the problem-solvers for undergraduate concerns. Every "academic fire" is reported to the academic advisor. Every entity on campus expects the academic advisor to do *something* to extinguish the academic fire. And she usually does. But sister-scholars are human and necessarily affected by their social contexts and social environments (Collins, 1986/2009). Acknowledging this affectation, some of the interview questions asked involved the sister-scholar's perceptions of her work environment as it relates to the positive and negative aspects of the profession, as well as working during a pandemic, and finding value in work. Although Lilly mentioned that faculty interaction was a negative aspect of her profession, she also mentioned the positive aspect which is that she enjoyed her coworkers and her supervisor, the dean. Lilly also named her advisees as her

favorite part of her job, a close second behind, if not right along with, first place with her colleagues:

> But then, second to that or right along that is my students – I've got a lot of them, and so, I don't know them all by name – it's just that, I remember some of their stories and so, when they come in and they see me and they say, "Hey, Ms. Lilly! How are you?" You know, so and so "worked out and this happened. You remember, I was telling you this?" And I say, "Oh, yeah, yeah!" You can just look at them and they like that somebody is listening to them and they feel like they're cared about. I feel like they want to come and tell me those stories.

Asha also mentioned her advisees as a favorite part of her job because, "I think it is rewarding to know that you have had an impact on a student's life…to see them, um, sometimes, they're kind of hopeless." Asha then began a 3-D narrative inquiry space by describing a "success story" of a man she advised years ago. He was told by various colleges on campus that it was "mathematically impossible" for the student to earn a degree from their college. "I mean, he was heartbroken, too," she continued. Still, with her "handy-dandy calculator," she computed his grade point averages and found a path for his successful degree completion. And the student, in being an agent in his own life-story, successfully completed his degree. Asha ended her 3-D narrative inquiry space by recalling to me, "Then even after he completed his degree here, he wrote me the most beautiful letter. Aw, it just made, it just touched my heart. I'll have to show it to you." Asha then countered her favorite part of her job with her least favorite parts of the job, and they are when students lie and when students become ill and die:

Uh, the least favorite thing is um, I think I got, my pet peeve is when students

don't tell the truth. You know, I'm a straight-shooter and sometimes they can't

take it, but I can get a feel of when students can't take it and when they're going

to be the ones that's going to go beyond and go and complain or whatever, that's

why I kind of back off with them. But the other least favorite is when we lose

students literally through death. I had several students that I had formed

relationships with, and um, it's just really heartbreaking.

Joy, on the other hand, did not mention her advisees as a favorite part of her job. Instead,

Joy went into a 3-D narrative inquiry space to describe how her favorite parts of her job

have changed over the years: She mentioned her favorite parts of her job from the larger

lens of helping others in general and problem-solving in particular:

As far as job goes, um, my – things have shifted over the years. And that's a hard

question. Um… I enjoy being able to help others, you know, achieve whatever it

is they're trying to do, not just students, but also like staff. I try to encourage

them, you know, if I can help do something, then I will, if I can give you that, you

know, step up. When it comes to students, I guess the main thing I enjoy about

advising is solving a problem. It's like a puzzle every time a student comes in...

So, it's problem solving for me, like it just keeps it going. And sometimes it's

like, girl, you got that. You got that student so straight. Like, you know, and

sometimes it's disappointing when you can't. But um, I think I enjoyed that

[working with students], back in the day, I would have said, "Oh, I love working

with the students," but I'll be honest with you, that's not the most enjoyable thing

anymore. Um, it's just being able to help them solve those problems.

I gathered that, because of her constant perceptions of being devalued by various campus entities, Joy has reserved herself to being more of a prescriptive advisor (Cate & Miller, 2015). Joy's least favorite part of the job involves how she is perceived by others and being given additional tasks from departments outside of the college where she works. "The least favorite thing is, sometimes, I think I'm just misunderstood," Joy admitted. She continued, "And I don't really pull punches much. You know, people say they want honesty, but a lot of times they don't. A lot of it is my opinion," she said.

Nonetheless, she stated, "But I speak it and I feel like I respect others as well." Joy spent a significant amount of time discussing the other least favorite thing about her profession, which is having outside college entities influencing what she does day-to-day. When referencing the various ways that each college and department advises their students, Joy stated, "Everybody's different…what works for [one college] may not work for [another college] … and it's tough when you have people who really don't know, but they have enough power and influence to influence what I do." Joy admitted, "That's very frustrating. That's what makes me consider leaving the job…having so many bosses is a problem." Joy's responses represent the complex and intersectional ways that power relations "co-produce one another in ways that reproduce unequal material outcomes" (Collins, 2019, p. 46) that "make flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39) a sister-scholar's lived experiences. These intersectional oppressions create stress for the sister-scholar as she attempts to engage in critical reflection – while simultaneously extinguishing academic fires.

Several additional sub-categories emerged under academic firefighting that all seemed to relate to one another during the data analysis process. Academic advising for

undergraduates can be a stressful profession; therefore, it was notable that all of the colleges in which each sister-scholar works had recently lost an advising staff member, and this loss of a colleague resulted in increased workloads for the sister-scholars. As we discussed remote work during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Joy referenced a colleague who was soon retiring, and the college's response was to not replace the position, nor fund graduate assistants (GAs) for the upcoming semester, "Um, and the deans just told me about a week and a half ago that they were not replacing her position… and I'm like, okay… wait a minute, you mean ever?" Joy continued:

> And then they told me they weren't funding GAs either, I'm like, wait a minute. This um, so, I don't really know what I'm going to do. I just haven't had time to really deal with it, but um, it's, I'm like, if y'all don't understand what "essential" means, you, you're getting ready to. And so, you know, the advisors are going to have to take on that load, you know, kind of split up. I don't know what, what we're going to do, especially without any GAs, so, who knows?

Lilly stated that her department was also "down an advisor" during one of her interviews which was in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. When I asked Lilly what she would like to experience during academic advising, she mentioned, "Oh, I would love to experience smaller caseloads, like, what's recommended, like 250 to three hundred." Such high student caseloads prevent the holistic advising experience that Lilly seeks to have with her students:

> I would love to have a small group so that I could feel like I could really know their names and their stories, you know, kind of connect with them more because now, it's so many and it's kind of pulled so many ways. The conversations, you

have them, but they're quick. And it's like, you have to kind of move on to the

next student and move on to the next and its' like, it's harder to connect with them

the way that I would like to connect when you've got so many.

Asha noted the high student caseloads and how academic advisors are encouraged to

"clear" students to register, allowing students to register whether or not they meet with

their academic advisor, which has its benefits for the self-directed advisee and drawbacks

for those not self-directed. Asha stated, "Logistically, you can't see everybody. You're

going to have to go and find all of your good students that are self-directed, you know

who they are… they know what they're doing." "'Send me an email when you register

and I'll check it for you' and move on," she continued. Working remotely during the

COVID-19 pandemic has added to the challenges of academic advising for Asha. "I'm

trying to maintain my sanity," she began. "It's very challenging because I'm a people

person, and so, I miss the social interaction," she said. Asha described the life of

academic firefighting when she charged, "I find myself so engrossed into this computer,

and I'm looking down and constantly chasing emails, and chasing problems, and chase,

chase, chase. When I look up, you know, it's late." Asha finally admitted, "My schedule

is not normal. I work more hours at home."

The increased student caseloads due to lack of adequate staffing, exacerbated by

working during a pandemic, has restricted the sister-scholars from implementing any sort

of advising theory for which they may value. As mentioned earlier, Lilly believes that her

high student caseloads prevent her from engaging in holistic advising. Joy stated, "I have

my own philosophies and all that – I've abandoned half of that. Just to get the work

done…" Nonetheless, Joy believes in critical advising because she believes students

should be active agents in their success, whether in the classroom, or with utilizing the advising tools that they are taught by the sister-scholars, or whether it is in their lives outside of academia. Regarding undergraduate students, Joy quoted someone in a recent advising meeting we attended, "We are positioning them; we're teaching them how to live and how to be in the world – academics and all that. If we do it all for them, they'll never learn." When I asked Joy what she would like to experience during academic advising, Joy's answer represented her advising philosophy as "advising as teaching" (Crookston, 1972/1994/2009), where both advisor and advisee can teach and learn from one another:

> Um, I like for my students to come in and have learned something from the last time I saw them… When I turn that screen around and say, okay, how many hours are you going to take in the spring. "Well, I've been thinking about these, what do you think?" When do you plan to graduate? "Well, I want to talk to you because I'm thinking fall 2021, do you think I can do that?" That's what I want my students to do. When you come in and see me, I expect it to be a give and take, you know? Or the one that can check you and say, "Well, I don't think that…" Well, you know, that's not right, let me see, let me fix it for you, I mean, you know. That's what I…that would be lovely for all of us.

Asha described several students throughout her interview, some of which she formed continuing relationships with after the advisee graduated with a bachelor's degree. Asha became emotional throughout the interviews as she recalled students who became ill and died and students who went on to do well for themselves as professionals. Through her tears, she recalled the death of one student, "I had several students that I had formed

relationships with, and um, it's just really heartbreaking. I had another gentleman that was a musician, he was, he was such a delightful person." She continued, "He had an [non-profit] organization… because he had been through some things, drugs and the whole nine yards, but he was able to relate to the young men that he helped and older men, they just loved him." Asha is representative of the engaged pedagogic. Nonetheless, engaged pedagogics, like all firefighters, need community support. Therefore, I asked the sister-scholars questions to draw out (hooks, 1994) how they perceived the support they receive on campus.

Category: Academic Advising Support. The participants discussed how they viewed the support they have on campus from various colleagues and supervisors. Joy often mentioned her relationship with faculty and the dean of the college. Lilly also mentioned often her relationship with faculty and the dean of her college. Asha mentioned her relationship with the dean of her college and with faculty overall, not just within the college she works. Joy expressed a good relationship with her dean:

> I think, for some of them, like [the dean of her college], if I'm hell-bent against something, he'll listen, and if it comes to the day-to-day work, which he doesn't know a lot about, he'll usually, you know, he'll kind of conform. Unless it just doesn't make any sense to him. "Why, why don't you do this?" Okay, we can. Because every other time I go in there and I [say], you know, "You got a minute?" [The dean] replies, "You're not quitting, are you?" I say to myself; I wish I could. Because he knows that this [advising undergraduates] is a bear. Nobody wants to fool with this. Nobody wants to fool with this.

Joy feels supported by other staff on campus; however, Joy did not express the same support with her colleagues within the college she works, "Um, because this staff, I don't trust them. They're hard to deal with. Um, and they don't want to conform to things."

As is the case with the heterogeneity of a Black woman's lived experience (Allen, 1998; Collins, 2009/2019), Lilly provided her perceptions of the support she receives on campus from both her colleagues and the dean of the college:

> So, with coming to work, I love my coworkers and my boss. I've got an environment where I'm happy to see them and I feel like they are happy to see me. We ask questions about each other's lives, and [it is] just a nice, positive place to work.

Asha seemed to answer her question of faculty and staff support from the perspective of the entire campus. When I asked her if she felt supported by staff and/or faculty as a sister-scholar, she answered:

> Yeah, I think I do, and it's because of the relationship-building over the years, you know. Getting to know people and people know me, and sometimes they'll even mention, they'll say, "Well so and so told me about you," blah, blah, blah. I'm going like, I hope it's good. [Asha chuckled]

Conversely, Joy and Lilly do not feel as supported by faculty in their colleges as does Asha, though Joy found there is faculty support for sister-scholars on campus overall. Through data analysis, one of the tensions that arose between the sister-scholars and faculty in their respective colleges involved the tenet of student success. Joy perceives faculty in her college as dismissive of the advising profession, and Lilly perceives faculty in her respective college as unknowingly creating hindrances to student success. Joy

116

discussed often the classism she perceives is bestowed upon academic advisors for undergraduates. She is offended by how faculty does not "pay attention at all" to her knowledge of university policies and procedures, and how she utilizes her "taken-for-granted knowledge" (Collins, 2009, p. 38) in her profession. Joy discussed the tense interaction in general terms:

> But, campus-wide, you know, there is – I feel supported there. When it comes to faculty, in [Joy's college], um, it's 50/50. Um, I've had issues with faculty here. Because faculty sees us [academic advisors] as, here in [Joy's college] for sure, they see us as, well, glorified, you know "admins." If they pay attention, you know, some of them don't pay attention at all. But if they do, it's like we're glorified, whatever, it's like, y'all don't know the kind of work we [advisors] do around here.

Lilly mentioned her relationship with faculty as one of her least favorite things about her job and this relationship involves a tension between student success, which is defined as successful credit attainment, retention, and degree completion (Grajek, 2017). Lilly stated:

> Let's see, the least favorite thing, hmm, it's going to be, well, there are some faculty members who are not as agreeable on some initiatives that we try to do for students. They got, they've kind of got a, what is it, full professorship – tenured position – and I don't know, more used to the old way of thinking with students and not really wanting to budge. Yeah, on the same old way things have been done, wanting students to meet them at this high level that they're not at yet. And so, trying to get those faculty to come on board with the things that students need.

As I revisited my field notes (Clandinin, 2016) and analytical memos (Saldana, 2009), I gathered that Lilly felt somewhat stifled by her inability to promote her academic philosophies. She is prohibited from engaging in a humanist, engaged pedagogy (hooks, 2010) with her advisees because she has a high student caseload and because she cannot persuade faculty in her college to adopt a current higher education philosophy of student success. Unfortunately, these sister-scholar stories are rarely told and therefore not seen as valuable forms of knowledge (Parker, 2001; Robinson et al., 2013). For this reason, the narratives in this present study represent these rarely told stories, the stories that also allowed the second theme to emerge: The sister-scholar is a devalued professional in higher education.

Theme 2: The Sister-scholar as Devalued Professional

A pedagogy of freedom is the practice of education as an "experience in humanization" (Freire, 2001, p. 103). And humanization is "the people's vocation" (Freire, 2013, p. 43). The stories that emerged from the answers of the participants were stories that described how the sister-scholars felt treated by the other members of the academic pyramid (administration, faculty, and students). As I analyzed the data and compared the data to my analytical memos (Saldana, 2009), I kept noticing stories that described a dehumanization in work – the sister-scholars felt their voices were heard as individuals but not as a group of professional academic advisors for undergraduates. The sister-scholars described how their values have been discounted; the word "disrespect" was used often by Joy. Yet, this form of dehumanization is painfully familiar for Black women professionals (Allen, 1998; Parker, 2001). Still, a pedagogy of freedom requires an acknowledgment and a rejection of dehumanization by the oppressed and the

118

oppressor (Freire, 2013). As I continued to analyze the narratives, I found that all participants mentioned one steadfast and reified form of oppression and that is the controlling image (Collins, 2009) construct that continues to plague Black women in America. These controlling images are "pivotal in sustaining power relations" (Collins, 2019, p. 165).

They shared stories of being an essential employee yet still feeling invisible, stories of being unheard, and the stories of the self-esteem issues and familial expectations placed on a sister-scholar, these narratives allowed the theme of devaluation to emerge. However, Joy and Lilly focused on devaluation as it related to their professional lives, while Asha related devaluation to the larger lens of Black women, Black people, and self-esteem. Their stories described instances of disrespect for the essential yet invisible sister-scholar. The narratives describing devaluation ranged from the treatment endured from faculty, students, and other staff, to the unheard voices of the sister-scholar, to the pay inequities that the sister-scholar encounters in her professional life. Though essential, sister-scholars are the invisible, academic proletariats in the higher education hierarchy. Theme two and its categories emerged as data that represents how I humanized (Freire, 2013; Saldana, 2009) the sister-scholars' perceptions of their lived experiences.

Category: Disrespect – Essential yet Invisible. Joy described her thoughts on the daily struggles of Black women as "just not having the respect that you deserve. A lot of times you may not get it because you're a Black female. And there are automatically ideas of your limitations, or what people think that your limitations are." When I mentioned the phrase, presumed incompetent (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012), she replied,

"Yes. Oh yeah, like presumed incompetent. And, um, you know, it's, it is just simply a struggle," Joy admitted. She continued, "But it depends on what you're trying to do in life. I accept that. And I don't, it doesn't bother me quite as much, I don't think as maybe some other people." As she moved into a 3-D narrative inquiry space, Joy attributes not being as bothered by this presumption because she is used to being the only Black woman in the room, whether in higher education or other spaces in her past or present. "I kind of grew up that way. And um, I'm kind of used to it, that doesn't bother me at all," she averred. Still, she acknowledged that bias is present, "I'm not going to lie, it's true; not giving us the same opportunities as others. Or, um, you know, give me a chance to prove that I can't do it." Joy concluded:

> I don't mind being the token, you know, Black woman in the… but, um, if you're
> going to do that, then understand what comes with it, which can be… if it's time
> to speak it, I'm going to do that and if I don't agree with you, I'll do it
> respectfully.

As previously mentioned, Lilly felt devalued specifically by faculty in her college, but she also felt ignored by her colleagues one time when she broached the subject of white privilege:

> I went to an, um, advising conference last year. And one of the talks was about
> um, white privilege in higher education. It was a great talk and presentation. I
> took it, I came back to a staff meeting and they asked, "Oh, how was that
> conference?" And I said, "Ooh, oh, well, it was one talk on just white privilege
> and how we needed to make sure that in our conversations with students, we
> didn't have, we reflect on our biases and um, make sure we make all students a

part of the things that we do, and um, not to marginalize any groups," and I don't

know, everybody was frozen. Um, it was an uncomfortable time. And then

somebody quickly kind of, "Okay," and changed the [subject] and moved on. And

so, it was like, "Well, alright."

Asha mentioned a common issue with many organizations, which is that the practitioners

are "not heard, nobody listens to them." When in fact, Asha continued, "practitioners are

the ones that you need to be listening to." Asha further explained the importance of the

practitioner's voice that is ignored by those in "prestigious positions…when you really

need to trickle it down – that's where you're going to get the best effort, the most

efficient answers, more effective answers and stuff." She charged, "You have to listen to

the people that do it every day, day-to-day." Nonetheless, Asha concluded, "As far as

being a part of the university, as an employee of the university, I think people listen to

me. I don't feel like I'm not being heard professionally."

Devaluation also comes in the form of salaries and compensation. Joy and I

discussed the pay inequities for essential staff such as professional academic advisors for

undergraduates and Joy cited "not being recognized or paid for what you do" as one of

the problems she sees on campus. "And I know that's a universal issue, but I think it can

be fixed. And I think that it's, it's something that, you know, people don't want to put the

energy into," she said. Joy continued, "I'm going to say they don't want to because I

know that they can if they wanted to. And the university ought to be ashamed of

themselves in a lot of ways," she averred. Nonetheless, Joy shows her pragmatic side

when she admits "when you accept that salary and walk into that job, let me tell you

something, they're going to get their money's worth or whatever." Therefore, Joy stated

that she would advise a Black woman seeking to work as an academic advisor for undergraduates at Mont University to try the profession out for a few months because "you aren't getting a raise anytime soon most likely." Joy advises this Black woman to have a good attitude and to seek supplementary income if the Black woman feels the pay is inadequate, or to seek another profession. Joy concluded, "It's an entry-level job, even though we ask for a master's degree. You know what I'm saying – it's sad."

When asked what problems she sees on campus, Lilly stated that "on this campus, I don't know, it's with a lot of campuses… good employees are honored by putting more work on them." Nonetheless, Lilly feels adequately compensated and recognized for her "extra effort and work." However, Lilly acknowledged "that has not always been the case" as she went into a 3-D narrative inquiry space to recall a story of pay inequity at a prior institution:

> I've worked in areas where you work hard – you come to work early, you leave late – you do all the work, everything they give you, "Okay, yes, great, I'll do it." And it's no, you know, I had to, I went to a boss prior about any kind of compensation or any kind of title change. They told me I had to go back to school and get a master's degree – that was before I had a master's – to um, to even have a conversation. So, I did. I did that. Went in the program, got a master's, went back to the supervisor and asked, "Okay, I'm graduating in December, can we talk about actually changing…" And at that time, I was doing all the roles of an advisor, but my title didn't reflect that. And so, um, I went back, and he still was like, "Well, um, the budget can't support that at this time." And I don't know, I felt like, and then there were others – Caucasian females – who were getting

significant money. And um, I don't know how much they had to go and beg or if they even had to ask, but um, I felt like I wasn't treated the same. And so, I ultimately left that position and moved somewhere else.

Although Asha mentioned pay inequity experienced by Black women professionals, she also approached devaluation from a larger lens. Asha stated of the devalued sister-scholar, "you have the skills, you have the knowledge, you have the smarts, you have the intellect, you have all of that, but still it's, you know." She continued, "And then you sit, you sit back, and you observe when you see all of the things that go around, that go on around you, and you see people that get elevated, and you go like, 'hmm.'" Still, Asha charged that Black people in America have been historically devalued to the extent that it has affected our collective self-esteem. Asha stated:

Yeah, but I think our greatest, the remnants, really, of our past still haunt us today. And it impacts how we feel about ourselves; it impacts the things that we do. Um, I get upset with our people when we hurt one another. It's enough hurt in the world. And then on the other hand, there are some people doing some great things. So, my whole, I think all of that though, at the end has a lot to do with self-esteem. And how really, we have been crushed as a people. And it takes a great deal more for us to build up, and that's why I'm a proponent of building up rather than tearing each other down. Say something positive, you never know the impact that it's going to have, especially on our children.

Asha continued, "We have to work harder to give our kids self-esteem, to boost it up." She maintained, "As a mother, your life could be so much easier just by instilling positive things in your child because every child wants to please their parents." Asha asked me,

"Don't you want your mama to love you?" I answered, "Yes!" "That's the mind of a child – to please an adult. They all want to do it," she concluded. The devaluation experienced by Black people in their workplace is synonymous with the historical dehumanization of the Black body and mind in America. Sister-scholars seek humanization in their personal lives and in their professional lives.

Category: Dehumanization in Work. The sister-scholars interviewed all expressed enduring a high level of stress that many academic advisors experience at least twice a semester and that is registration. This stress weighs heavily on sister-scholars who take pride in being of assistance to undergraduates. Both Joy and Lilly mentioned that professional academic advisors for undergraduates are required to "churn out" as many registered students as possible – advise one student and quickly move on to the next advisee. The advising session is typically thirty minutes. However, some advisees, not realizing the pressure that professional undergraduate academic advisors are under, complain to a sister-scholar's dean that the students felt rushed. As Asha noted, some of the complaints are not founded in the truth and this can be hurtful to sister-scholars who take great pride in assisting students. Sister-scholars, as the working class governed by the ruling class of university administration, faculty, and students, are viewed as tools – academic mules used to carry the water.

Joy uses the word "frustration" often throughout her interviews. Part of her frustration is in the professional academic advisor for undergraduates being viewed as the proletariat:

Yeah, that's my biggest frustration with advising right now, it's because, you

have a student that complains. I'm getting to the point where I'm frustrated with

the fact that you would actually come to me because a student said, "My advisor hasn't contacted me." To me, I'm at the point where, you're working, we're professionals, we are not student workers, we don't ignore our work. We do our job, all day, every day. And it's actually insulting for, you know, a dean to email me and say, "This student said that they had not been advised." Are you kidding me? Or "They didn't know that they could register for their fall classes." Why are you wasting my time with this? Like, this is, I'm just kind of beyond that when it comes to advising.

Joy continued expressing how dehumanizing it feels when her supervisors question the professionalism of academic advisors for undergraduates:

You know that kind of stuff, it's easy for them to do that, for us to be a scapegoat, but you know, they're, it's exhausting. Because I feel like no other profession is treated this way. Um, if you have a faculty member where a student complains and says, you know, this faculty member hasn't responded to my emails, they don't go to the faculty and automatically say, oh well, you know, and slap them on the wrist, like, "Oh well, this student said," you know what I'm saying? You come with some type of professional manner to just inform them, you know, that a student had an issue and you let them handle it. But we're treated like, you know, like I said, a student worker with the response and I'm so tired of it, I can't even, you know, say.

As previously mentioned, Lilly is unable to express her academic philosophy of holistic advising, which can be dehumanizing for a sister-scholar who seeks to have more of a connection with her advisees. Lilly's full capacity as a sister-scholar is repressed because

125

of her high student caseloads; she admits that she would like to experience "smaller caseloads…like 250 to three hundred" during academic advising. Nonetheless, when I asked has her intersectional identity of being a Black woman professional influenced how she advises Black women undergraduates, she said, "Yes, I think it does. Um, because with my Black female students, I do ask of them kind of, um, and I ask all the students, kind of questions about their career paths." Lilly continued, "But with, sometimes with the African American students, I can see, females, I can see myself in some of them, and I just can, I can recall, like… I identify with a lot of them, where they're at." Lilly believes in humanizing the student because "sometimes, they're kind of confused… and they're concerned about what the outcome, you know, 'When I get this degree, what is going to happen?'" So, she encourages hard work from her advisees while showing her vulnerable side at the same time, "I tell them not to stress and worry so much. I kind of tell them I had to get to like that idea of working hard. I tell them my story about in my undergrad."

Asha approached dehumanization from the perspective of the sister-scholar making a conscious effort to humanize her advisees. To humanize someone is to show that you too are vulnerable as Asha does when she discusses her marriage with an advisee who was going through similar marital issues. "I can relate to some of the things that they share in their journey and with family and juggling, trying to survive relationships," Asha began. She said, "I mean, I've had women – you know my situation – I've had women to talk to me about a similar situation… I try to encourage them." Asha continued:

> It encourages me to continue to encourage them. Because you know, it's easy for
> us to look outwardly at someone, you know, we always tend to, as human beings,

126

how we judge people from that, and you never know what people are going

through. So, you really have to, I have to watch myself and what I say, and my

tone, and my attitude because I don't know what they are going through. And

sometimes, it has been a thing where I may have had the wrong attitude and they

have said something about what they are going through, or what they have gone

through in their lives, and I go like, "Oh, wow." Thank you, God. I have to

humble myself.

Dehumanization also makes both continuous appearances and sustained cameos (racist

tropes repackaged anew) in higher education in the form of racial and gender

discrimination. When I asked Joy how she coped with racial discrimination, she entered a

3-D narrative inquiry space to describe a past event at another institution because at Mont

University "there hasn't really been an instance where I felt like I needed to, you know."

Joy recalled the discriminatory incident at a previous higher education institution (HEI)

as one where Joy was overlooked for a promotion that required experience and a master's

degree – she had both – in favor of a White woman with no experience and no master's

degree.

Joy noted, "I got passed over for a promotion that, you know, I'm not sensitive at

all," but… "I couldn't sleep at night." Joy filed a claim and eventually left the institution

six months later. Still, Joy has admitted to being a witness to racial discrimination as it

happens to others at Mont University, yet she does not attribute all instances to be based

solely on race or ethnicity. Joy seemed more expressive when I asked her how she coped

with gender discrimination. For Joy, race, class, and gender are not static categories that

apply "in all times in all places" (Collins, 2019, p. 40). Again, she admitted, "Well, I

think that, for me, I don't know that it's been a big issue, I mean, I'm an advisor. We're typically counselor-types, women, there's a lot, you know, men, we have some, and I appreciate them too." Yet, instead of an instance regarding her own lived experience with gender discrimination, she talked more passionately about a White woman colleague's lived experience with gender discrimination. Joy stated, "But um, I think that [she] didn't get the job because she was a woman. Not White, that wasn't it. She didn't get the job because she was a female." Joy continued, "And the gender bias is rampant and real." Asha's answers to how she copes with racial and gender discrimination were the same. Asha replied:

> How do I cope with it? I try to process it in my head and um, think about what I'm going to say before I say it because I'm definitely going to say something. So, um, I just call it out and deal with it, I try to deal with it at that moment. I try not to, because I have matured, where I know and understand some things that people just don't know any better. And they have not thought about or processed what they said, and they don't realize how something they may have said or done – how it's perceived or how it comes out.

Asha's maturity has allowed her the gift of wisdom. Asha deems herself a "sophisticated rebel" similar to the tempered radical (Meyerson & Scully, 1995) for which I deem myself. These nonconformist terms will be fleshed out more in theme four; additionally, these terms are notable for the audience to learn how sister-scholars choose to control their own narratives of self-definition, countering the controlling images and texts that have historically haunted Black American women. The controlling images mentioned by the sister-scholars will now be discussed in turn.

128

Category: Controlling Images and Self-definition. The U.S. has historically decided how Black women should be defined and valued, yet Black women have historically resisted these controlling images and definitions (Collins, 2009). Nonetheless, these images persist. Controlling images haunt Black women, no matter their social location. These hauntings can also have detrimental effects on the self-esteem of Black women. These images likewise haunt the psyche of the sister-scholar because each participant, without being prompted, mentioned at least one controlling image that she has resisted or attempted to resist. Yet, as I analyzed the data, I wondered if some Black women are indeed controlled by the images (hooks, 2015) bestowed on us by the United States of America.

When I asked Joy about her favorite things about her family life, she answered, "I like being a mama and a wife most of the time." Interestingly, she continued, "And I'm like a mama and a wife here [at work], too." This admission immediately brought the controlling image of the "mammy figure" (Parker, 2001) to my mind. Although Joy was the only participant to mention this "motherly" feeling, I have felt the same way when advising undergraduates, adult students, who expect the sister-scholar to deposit information (Freire, 2013) in the advisees' heads without the students having the curiosity to find information on their own, or without them having the self-directedness to recall what I have already taught them. Many students will feel no need for self-directedness if they can simply email their academic advisor and expect immediate responses. And many students assume that no immediate response warrants a complaint. The sister-scholar, being relied on to provide information like a motherly figure, is then approached by her supervisor like she is a child, oddly, and not a professional, as Joy

stated earlier. Resisting the "mammy figure" as a controlling image is a frustrating aspect of being a sister-scholar. Yet, Joy explicitly mentioned another controlling image that consistently enters the room uninvited by the sister-scholar and that is the "angry Black woman." When we were discussing her least favorite things about her job, Joy stated when explaining her outspokenness, "But what's difficult is being that person – kind of like the angry Black woman in the room." Yet, as many sister-scholars have done and continue to do, Joy has turned her oppression into creativity (Collins, 2009). She stated, "I actually have embraced that because I think there can be some positive connotation to it – I wrote a poem about it one time."

Lilly is very conscious of how she is perceived and a controlling image that she mentioned at least twice to answer two questions is the "angry Black woman" construct. When I asked her if she negotiates her identity as a Black woman in a professional setting, Lilly answered:

> Uh-huh. I think so. I think, maybe, when I really dig into it. Maybe I'm not as assertive sometimes because I'm fearful of being the "angry, aggressive, Black female," and I'm pushing so far from that, that I'm kind of muted um, in a way, sometimes. Just trying to stay away from stereotypes, yeah.

When I asked Lilly how she defines being a Black woman, part of her answer involved the omnipresent "angry Black woman" construct:

> It means that I can face adversity and still come out on the other side with a smile… Just, I don't know, being a Black woman, it means that I've got to teach my daughter that there's going to be some, some assumptions that are going to be made about her. And that some of her time is going to be spent trying to prove to

people that she's not, you know, the angry, Black woman or somebody who is not

positive or happy. Um, sometimes I feel like Black females have a lot of pressure,

a lot of the world on our shoulders to help our families, you know, to be the

caretakers for a lot of people, family. But it's a, it's a – I don't know, I wouldn't

want to be anything else.

Asha's answers to many questions encompassed many topics within one narrative. As she

and I entered "the midst" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 43) of a discussion about Black and Native

American assimilation in the U.S., we evolved the discussion to the topic of identity

negotiation in HEIs. Referencing sister-scholars in our dyadic, I asked, "How do we

negotiate our identity in higher education? You know, how much of us can we show

without you being offended?" Asha replied, "Right. Or saying you're the angry Black

woman. Why do I have to be angry? When I'm, you know – when can I express myself?"

Controlling images are also bestowed on a sister-scholar by her family and their

expectations of her. All three participants described 3-D narrative inquiry spaces of their

childhood which shaped their self-esteem as well as shaped how they have existed and

how they were expected to exist in the world. As Joy and I discussed how she defined the

daily struggles of Black women, our conversation evolved into being self-sufficient. Joy

stated of family expectations:

That's what we learned. I grew up, there was six of us… And I've seen it with my

own eyes. And you know, in my experience that, you know, especially mothers,

they raise their daughters, they love their son. And that's really the way it was in

my family, because they raise their daughters to be independent, to do things for

themselves, to be able to take care of home, and all of that. But when it comes to

those boys, well, I love you. So, I may shelter you a little more, I may let you get away with a little more. So, that's always been my experience. I see it here [Mont University] as well.

Joy described not only the expectations of Black women brought upon them by their families, but also the expected loneliness that can come with being a Black woman with goals as Joy described the people that she has historically witnessed an advisee bring to the advising session:

We would always say that we know who's coming with the student. So, if it's a White male, he would always have like, usually, not always, but most of the time his mom's going to be with him or whatever, maybe a girlfriend, but most of the time his mama. A White female, daddy's going to come with her. And he's going to make sure she has everything. Black males, it could be a girlfriend. It could be their mama. You know, somebody is helping him. A Black female is going to come by herself. She might bring a baby with her. She might have you know… she has to come… she's coming alone. She's handling things on her own, and we used to see it, we talked about it all the time. That's what we do as Black women. And that's what we're expected to do, we get used to it, you know?

As Joy moved within this narrative of Black women with mentioning the same pressure and expectations described by Lilly, Joy admitted of Black sons:

There's no expectation for them to do the same thing that a girl would do, but that's how we raise our Black girls and Black women. So, it's like you have to – you're the strongest one. You have to be the strongest one in… for everybody…the Black female, you're on your own and you're expected to do it

132

on your own. And if you can't, you're a failure, or you need to work harder, or you know, we make the biggest sacrifices.

As declared earlier, Lilly discussed the pressure placed on Black women by their families. As she moved into a 3-D narrative inquiry space of what she was taught as a child, she continued her definition that being a Black woman "here in the United States" meant "for me, well, I was taught when I was growing up, it meant that I was going to have to have a few more struggles in life in comparison to my Caucasian female counterparts." Lilly was taught that she would have to "stay late… dot every 'I' and cross every 't'" at her jobs to receive "the same level of recognition, uh, that my counterparts would get."

When I asked Asha to define what it means to be a Black woman, she mentioned sacrifice and she also took her answer to a 3-D narrative inquiry space – back to the motherland.

Oh, wow. My definition of being a Black woman…we're really the, the, the leaders of the world, I think. Because we have to, we have multiple roles, and we often neglect ourselves trying to help others. We, we, we take care of everybody but self. I think that's just part of our DNA [deoxyribonucleic acid]. This is just something that we do. I watched my mother do that; I watched aunts do that; I watched cousins do that. When it comes to family, we always put everybody ahead of ourselves and uh, sometimes to our detriment, often to our detriment of our own physical and mental well-being and health, unfortunately. But you know, I… I'm very proud of what we have done, and our roots and stuff – it all goes back to the motherland.

The lived experiences of sister-scholars differ from those not "Black and not female," (Robinson et al., 2013, p. 60). Sister-scholars perceive their lived experiences as these experiences relate to and intersect with the power dynamics represented in higher education. Nonetheless, in exposing the language of critique comes an exploration of the language of possibility (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003), since the sister-scholars resist devaluation and dehumanization in work, favoring instead an agentic disruption (Jackson, 1998).

Finding Value in Lived Experiences

The sister-scholar is an agentic disruptor (Jackson, 1998). Agentic disruptors are radical adult educators, although their radicalism is tempered by their professional positions. As a sister-scholar, I feel that my voice is shackled, so I engage in tempered radicalism (sharing narratives and critical advising) to create agency as a form of personal transformation within me and within the Black women with whom I share my stories. Still, agentic, self-disruptors engage in "intense introspection" (Samit, 2015, p. 4) as they critique their beliefs, values, and academic philosophies. The summer of 2020 forced me to confront my views as a radical adult educator. The summer of 2020 was a season filled with rage and advocacy – rage from the pandemic and rage from another American murder of a Black man caught on video. Yet, alongside this parade of rage was a waft of advocacy, an advocacy to assist the melanized and marginalized voices yearning to be free from oppression. Because of the seemingly global interest in a freedom from oppression of the American Black mind and Black body, I was interested to see how the sister-scholars were experiencing this waft of advocacy.

In approaching this with intersectionality in mind, I had to acknowledge social inequality as I analyzed the data from the sister-scholars because social inequalities are relational and driven by power relations (Collins, 2019). Applying social context allowed me to understand how each participant is influenced by her social location (Collins, 2019) in society and within the university as she answered questions about advocacy and social injustices. And social justice allowed me to learn more about how Joy, Lilly, and Asha were finding value in their lived experiences as part of an oppressed group in America. The data shows that although the sister-scholars had to process the summer of 2020 with all of its raging injustices, they kept advocating, but they were nonetheless affected by the season of rage and advocacy. And I wondered, who advocated for the sister-scholars during that time? Who advocated for the mothers of Black sons, mothers like me? Who listened to her stories? And this analytical analysis of the advocacy for this sister-scholar required an intersectional approach that incorporated who she is as an agentic disruptor (Jackson, 1998). This agentic disruptor (Jackson, 1998) finds value in acknowledging how intersectionality's core constructs of social inequality, social context, and social justice allow her to retell (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), reclaim, clarify, and make meaning of her lived experiences as an advocate in her profession and as a Black woman in America (Collins, 2009/2019).

Theme 3: Advocacy and Mentorship

Sister-scholars can find value in their professional lives through advocacy and through mentorship. As the themes emerged, I noticed that Joy and Asha both mentioned a childhood memory that the three of us share: We were all teased by our siblings as children. I wondered if this was a correlation to how we came into the profession of

advising, being advocates for undergraduates. We all find great satisfaction in advocating for students and Joy and Asha both mentioned their advocation often. Joy and Asha are advocates for students and for fellow professional academic advisors for undergraduates. However, all three participants mentioned that advising allows little time to mentor students. Still, the data shows that sister-scholars also need advocates and mentors in higher education. Joy, Lilly, and Asha were asked questions that ranged from how they deal with unfair treatment, to their engagement with Black women undergraduate advisees, to relationship-building with sister-scholars and with non-sister-scholars. I asked the sister-scholars how they respond to unfair treatment in general. Joy stated, "Um, I'm more likely to speak up for someone else rather than myself. But I'm usually, and of course, it depends on what it is. But um, I'm not usually that quiet about it." Joy believes in fighting for the underdog. For the pragmatic Joy, silence is complicity. She continued, "Life is not fair. But you know, if, if you're a bystander in, you know, in the mob that's, you know, stoning a person, and you don't do anything, you're just as culpable."

When I asked Lilly how she responds to unfair treatment, she replied, "You know what? Unfair treatment – I, I don't really – I feel like I kind of just take it, and then I ponder over it, but I don't know what to do." Lilly admitted, "I'm not um, I'm not real outspoken, like, like, my daughter… with me, I kind of, I don't know, there is a reluctance for me to really, you know, to get up or to say something." She concluded, "I just kind of, I don't know, I just ponder like, this is just the way it is." Of how she responds to unfair treatment, Asha stated, "I'm very bold and I will call it out. Again, I'm going to be very respectful, but I'm going to call it out." Asha then took me to a 3-D

narrative inquiry space into one of her church meetings where she felt she had to speak up. One of the deacons of her church embarrassed the building engineer in a meeting and Asha told the deacon, "You were wrong for that. You don't embarrass people like that. And I'm not going to participate in this – I'm going home." She concluded, "Yeah, but I do, when I see unfairness, I'm just going to say something… it's in my DNA, it involves my insides, my spirit is not comfortable."

Category: Sister-scholars and their Journey to Advocacy. It was notable that Joy and Asha mentioned being teased by siblings growing up and, as I was teased by my three older brothers growing up, I could only wonder if our childhood played a role in our staunch advocacy for others. When I asked Joy had she ever downplayed her abilities and strengths, she took me to 3-D narrative inquiry spaces of her childhood, her teenage years, her college years, and her first job to answer the question. Joy began with her present experience, "Not really in my personal life because I have a small circle I guess, and mostly it's family. And family, you know, I was always that kid, so they're like, "Oh well she knows this; she knows that." Joy continued in her 3-D narrative inquiry space:

> When I was growing up, I was, you know, the fat kid, it was six of us. Always overweight or whatever. I got picked on a lot, not at school, if I did at school, it never… that's why, you know, I think going to school with White people was kind of, it was different. Here's the other thing, academically, I got you. So, I was always at the top of my class – don't play with me. So, um, so, I didn't have issues at school. It was at home. It was six of us – you know what I'm talking about? Six in the house and I was the only chubby child! But oh, did I get it all the time.

Joy further explained how this ridicule from her siblings shaped her personality:

And that's why I say, you know, I had to learn to be an extrovert. I was

extremely sensitive; I cried all the time, you know, I stayed in my books. Um, but

that was an escape for me. I used to read all the time or whatever. I was socially

awkward. And um, I was a church girl. That was my social thing with my friends

at church and you know that kind of stuff. But I was picked on a lot. I was very,

you know, um, it was difficult for me growing up, but it was mostly family.

Joy concluded by taking us through her 3-D narrative inquiry spaces of high school,

college, and her first job:

Well, I don't know what happened. I went through high school, you know, I did

fine, you know. And when I got to college, I think at some point, I just made a

decision that I'm not going to let people treat me or make me feel a certain way.

And I just carried that through. My first job, I worked for a lady, that was the

toughest woman. If you can work for [her], you can work for anybody. But um,

you know, that taught me a whole lot. And I kind of watched her – she was a

White lady – she was organized, she was structured, she meant what she said, she

didn't pull punches, you know, whatever. And I learned a lot from her and so, um,

I just kind of learned my own voice – part of it was church too.

Asha also mentioned being teased by her siblings and discussed how the teasing impacted

her self-esteem:

You know, I had to overcome, um, I had to overcome some things. You know,

from being called, "black," you know, my own siblings would do that to me. So, I

had a little, I had some self-esteem issues, um, I have self-esteem issues about my

size, you know, skinny. You know, it's the whole stereotype, I even, um, had issues with certain colors, wearing bright colors and stuff because of all the stereotypes. And I think what changed my whole perception about that was, I think I gradually got past some of those things, but – and I don't even know if it's subconsciously – I wear darker colors and not bright colors. But I tell you, I feel better when I wear the bright colors. When I went to Senegal in West Africa, and I saw all of those statuesque men, tall, and everybody in control with all these beautiful bright colors on…yes, I'm saying like, wow, okay, I look good in these colors. So, I had to overcome that just from my own people.

All three sister-scholars advocate for students whether it is in their respective colleges, in student success meetings, or in curriculum meetings. Earlier, Lilly stated how she advocates for undergraduate student success during college meetings, and she described how she is met with tension from the faculty in her college. Asha is "just an advocate for people, period. It doesn't matter who you are, where you are, I'm a believer in being fair and equitable." Asha stated, "there are issues that do come up all the time that pertains to students… sometimes, the University creates problems for students, things that could be easily resolved." Asha continued, "for example, if we are doing student success… little minor things like… I'm talking about language; we need to have student-friendly language in our systems that we use." These barriers, Asha stated, "frustrate me. Those are things that make us work harder, it frustrates students because we put students in a position where they – it jeopardizes their success."

Of her outspokenness, Asha admitted, "I just believe in standing up for what's right and I don't care what people say." She concluded, "I know people look at me

strange, and they probably make comments under their breath," yet, of the issues that professional undergraduate academic advisors have, Asha said, "if nobody says anything, no one will ever know." Joy admits that her advocacy for students is also for the benefit of the advising staff. Joy said of her college's curriculum committee, "they do things, when they come up with certain curriculum changes, they have no idea how it affects students a lot of times, or the current curriculum or whatever." Joy stated that faculty in her college "have a narrow focus about curriculum and what they want done and all of that. So, sometimes, it's like, that's not going to work." Joy was "extremely opposed" to one of the curriculum changes being sought and her advocacy was for both staff and students. Joy explained that her reasoning for opposition is "because when you say, 'speaking up,' it was really for two different things, one for students and the other for staff. Because when they make changes like that, it's very difficult for us as advisors to regulate that." Joy explained an experience regarding a change in curriculum for her college and how a sister-scholar interpreted the change:

> I asked for, what's the research that says if a student… When it comes to staff having to do more work in trying to regulate stuff, and, you know, because they think this stuff is done automatically, but it's not, um, I will speak up for that. And also, the students because, you understand that when a student stops out [ceases attending college for a spring or fall term or longer], when they come back, they are, you know, they come under a new curriculum. So, if you had students who were under the old curriculum, technically, they have to go back and retake those courses. And also, it effects like, financial aid and all that. Because we get a lot of transfer students, they have to repeat those courses, they have to

pay for those courses, and you know, sometimes, financial aid won't pay for them

to repeat a grade that they already passed. So, those are the things that I try to

bring up – sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn't. In that instance, it didn't.

A sister-scholar's lived experiences can shape how she advocates for students. A sister-scholar's lived experiences can also shape how she advocates for herself and for her campus allies. The data analysis revealed that although sister-scholars are advocates, sister-scholars need HEI advocates too.

Category: Sister-scholars Need Advocates and Mentors Too. Although Joy and Lilly both mentioned undergraduate academic advisors' lack of time to mentor advisees, sister-scholars are advocates for students, other staff, and even faculty in some instances. However, the data analysis showed that professional undergraduate academic advisors need mentors, advocates, and campus allies much like their advisees need these allies. Joy, Lilly, and Asha explained their advocacy for advising as a profession, their relationships with other sister-scholars, and their relationships with other campus allies.

Advocacy. Joy spoke often about her advocation for advisors and advising. Joy began, "Somebody has to speak up for advisors." Still, Joy made explicit my belief of undergraduate academic advisors as academic proletariat:

> But when you talk about advisors, I'm talking about professional advisors on this
>
> campus. We are like, you know, the lowest on the low, in terms of professional,
>
> you know, they consider us support. That's fine. If all you want me to do is hit a
>
> button, let a student register, I can put in a PIN [personal identification number].
>
> But if you want me to meet with them, and deal with their issues, and help them,
>
> and give them advice and all that, you're talking about a whole different level.

But everything falls, trickles down to advisors. How much more can we take?

How much more can we do?

The need for sister-scholars to have campus allies and advocates is realized in one of Lilly's 3-D narrative inquiry spaces as she takes us to her previous position at a community college. Lilly described it as a "primarily Black environment" where "I was disliked by many and I was accused of being fake." The accusations lodged against her were that her "positivity and enthusiasm were not genuine." Her congeniality was thought to be "a front" and ingenuine. Lilly stated, "I don't really change, this is just who I am, so, uh, it's like, okay." Nonetheless, these accusations bothered Lilly as she admitted, "sometimes I still get a little self-conscious about it." Lilly continued her admission as it relates to how she has carried those lived experiences with her to Mont University:

> And then here, sometimes I think, you know – people may not have even given
> me any indication to feel that way but sometimes – I'll think, "Well, do they think
> I'm, you know, I am sincere?" You know, sometimes, I just, an extra smile or just
> saying hello to people – I'm from the country, so all of us are just kind of smiling
> and saying hello.

As Lilly was telling her story, I wondered if some Black women have been so subconsciously affected by the controlling image of the "angry Black woman" (hooks, 2015) that perceiving a genuinely kind and passive Black woman as inauthentic is socially acceptable. Lilly endured this stereotyping by other Black women in the community college, and Lilly has carried the image of the "angry Black woman" with her as she has moved within her lived experiences, as had the women with which she worked

at the community college seemed to have carried. For some, the controller of the images has succeeded in controlling those controlled and their view of themselves. I found this an example of how the controlling images are adept at *assisting the controlled* with perpetuating forms of oppression (Freire, 2013) – the controller's role has become less explicit but still all the more destructive to the Black mind yearning to be free.

Again, when I asked Asha if she felt supported by faculty and staff on campus, she said, "Yeah, I think I do and it's because of the relationship-building over the years, you know." Asha has worked in various departments at Mont University, and, like Joy and Lilly, Asha has built successful relationships with various employees in different departments at Mont University. As we moved through the interview questions, the sister-scholars discussed how they have built relationships with their mentors and campus allies.

Mentorship. Interestingly, when I asked each participant if she has any campus allies and if so, how was the relationship formed – all three sister-scholars stated in the affirmative, all three sister-scholars acknowledged that they have Black and White women campus allies at Mont University – yet, to answer the question specifically, they all took me back to 3-D narrative inquiry spaces of when they were first hired at Mont University. Joy not only mentioned the benefit of having campus allies on a personal level, but the pragmatic Joy also stated that having campus allies allows her "to operate a lot of times" as many of her campus allies are faculty and staff who work in various departments throughout the university and assist her in many day-to-day advising operations. Joy met one Black woman faculty member soon after Joy was hired, and they formed a friendship. And Joy followed the advice that she told me she would give other

Black women seeking to be hired at Mont University. Joy said she learned her job before

she began building relationships outside of her college, "For the first three years almost, I

never left [her college]. All I'd do was see students, every thirty minutes, you know." Joy

continued, "So, there wasn't any time to do anything outside, but after a while, I'm

branching out." Joy met another Black woman from a different department, who then

invited Joy to be a part of "a group of them that would get together, and it just happened

to be all Black females that knew each other, somehow, someway, and they would

socialize or whatever, go to somebody's house every month." At that meeting, Joy was

able to form relationships with other Black women professionals – some worked at Mont

University and some had previously worked at Mont University.

Lilly described her campus allies and her mentors, with some of the Black women

having both roles. Lilly was not hired initially as an undergraduate academic advisor at

Mont University. Lilly discussed her mentor in the first department where she worked – a

Black woman professional "who gave me my first job on campus." The mentor "gave me

a chance, and um, she showed me how she had to do things in corporate America. She

had some insights to give, and she was open and shared with me things in all kinds of

situations." Lilly then began working in a college on campus where she met another

Black woman professional who became a friend and mentor. Lilly stated of her friend:

> I don't know, we connected, she helped me, she was kind of my trainer who
>
> helped me, but then she just has the personality to want to make lifelong friends.
>
> You got some people who can easily identify people, form friendships that will
>
> last forever, and she's that kind of person. So, I was just grateful that she found
>
> something in me that she wanted to sustain, so even though I left the University,

she kept in touch. I came back and when I came back, she taught me everything

about systems that I wouldn't have known otherwise.

Lilly went on to describe her campus allies – Black women professionals who work in different departments and colleges at Mont University – one being Joy, which I did not know until I interviewed both sister-scholars. Lilly stated, "[Joy] is a part of a group of females, we all go out to dinner to celebrate birthdays. We routinely get together every couple of months or so to celebrate birthdays."

Unlike Joy and Lilly, Asha mentioned her first supervisor at Mont University, a Black male since retired, as one of her campus allies. Asha was informed of an open position and she applied for it. She passed the required tests, interviewed with the dean, and "girl, got the job," she exclaimed. Understandably, Asha was quite nervous during the testing and the dean told her, "Just don't worry about – just take your time." "That man was so patient with me and my flops," Asha admitted. The dean was active in advocating for Black students' equity on campus as was Asha. After I asked another question, Asha revisited the campus ally question and amended her answer to state to me directly, "And I wanted to tell you too that I consider you one of my allies," to which I answered, "Aw, me too." Asha and I are campus allies much like Joy and Lilly. The conversations between Asha and I are expansive. During any conversation, her and I may discuss work, politics, relationships, family, geography, religion and spirituality, world history, and the "grand narrative" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 22). Many of our conversations have always the contours of race and gender as scaffolds under which we frequently discuss the American Black body and Black mind yearning to be free.

Theme 4: The Black Body and the Black Mind Yearning to be Free

Both interviews for each sister-scholar occurred in late 2020. The sister-scholars were all working remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. George Floyd was murdered in May 2020. I observed that one result of the many results of George Floyd's murder was a global dialogue – many people who were historically the culprits missing from the conversation were now ready and willing to engage in dialogue with Black people about Black people. One could only wonder how long this newfound interest to thoughtfully engage with the American Black mind and Black body would last. Therefore, as the year came to an end, I was interested to ask the sister-scholars how they were adjusting to the pandemic while working remotely as a professional, along with how the sister-scholars were processing this newfound interest in the American Black mind and Black body.

As mentioned earlier, Asha admitted that while working remotely during the pandemic she is "trying to maintain my sanity… I miss the social interaction." She stated, "I work more hours at home" than she did before working remotely. She continued, "You know… sometimes I'll say, 'Oh… I was supposed to send this person this, or I need to respond to this,' or whatever, and so, I find myself drafting emails in the night to send the next day." Asha stated of the pandemic specifically, "Um, the pandemic itself is very frightening, especially when I hear of people who really felt like they guarded themselves and tried to not contract it." Joy has struggled with remote work, particularly in her quest to find a workspace at home. Joy confessed, "But for me, it has been really crazy – I sit in this dining room – first of all it took me a minute to find the best place to work from my house." She continued, "So, trying to find a workstation has been difficult for me. I've

146

been at the kitchen table, you know, whatever." Joy too has admitted to working longer hours while we work remotely:

> I usually, I get up early… so, it's like 6:30 [am], I'm checking my email, I look up, it's 11 o'clock [am], I may go check on my child to make sure he's still alive, and then I come back – I don't even eat lunch a lot of days because I'm sitting right here. I'll go to the bathroom, and then I'm like, "Oh, let me grab an apple," or something, let me do this really quick and then I'm going to take me a break. No, I will be here at 6 o'clock p.m. So, we've been grateful to be able to work from home, but just making the shift has been a challenge, but you know, we're, we're doing it. So, me personally, it's been tough. I'm working too much probably.

Lilly's description of working remotely can be summed up in one word, hectic:

> And so, at the very beginning of the pandemic in March [2020], uh, I felt like, working from home was all-consuming. Like, the students were nervous and concerned, so they were emailing me a lot, and uh, we were down an advisor, I was working, man, like every day. I was working 6:30 or 7 [am] up until 7 or 8 at night. And the lunch, it was just, you know, a straight one-hour lunch, and um, getting back with it to try to stay afloat. And then you had registration in April [2020] – hectic, hectic, hectic, non-stop, non-stop.

In the midst of working remotely during peak registration and through the pandemic, George Floyd was murdered in May 2020. His pleas for help resounded throughout the world and one result was a global shift in interest in how the Black body – and the Black mind – were *existing and surviving* in the United States of America.

The George Floyd Effect. Although there have been Black children, men, and women, such as Breonna Taylor, killed by law enforcement in 2020, and although there have been Black people killed by law enforcement decades before and since George Floyd, his murder was the 21st century's global galvanizer for the subsequent protests for civil rights and support for movements such as Black Lives Matter. As my then twenty-year old son and I struggled to make sense of our place in America, I asked the sister-scholars how or if George Floyd's murder and the subsequent protests have affected the sister-scholars and their families.

Joy's reaction and her son and her husband's reactions to the George Floyd effect had some variance. Around April 2020, Joy said she "stopped actually watching the news." That is until May 2020 when her son approached her:

Mom, have you seen this video? And he showed me a video of a man who, basically, was murdered in front of his eyes. And I was just like, "What?" So, that's actually when I, how I first, you know, and um, we talked about it. You know, he um, he has an awareness of you know, being a young Black male. But he also, um, most of his friends are White, you know, White kids or whatever. And so, he, kind of walks this line but it doesn't seem to bother him to a certain degree. But so, he's like, you know, "I don't understand why – Black people – why are we treated this way? Like, what did we do?" and all of that kind of stuff.

Joy's husband is different in that "he's very cynical when it comes to things." Joy divulged that her husband's responses to the American murders of the Black body are "Why are you surprised?" and "What are you – what are y'all up in arms about? This happens every day. It's going to keep happening." Nonetheless, Joy acknowledged, "But

then again, I think sometimes, he does get affected by certain situations even though he may not say it. But he's kind of militant." Joy then analyzed her lived experiences of being the mother of a Black male and being married to a Black male in America:

> So, just trying to deal with two Black males with these situations, one who's learning and who doesn't understand why, the other who thinks he has it figured out and like, thinks it will never change, this is the life we live. And you know, it's tough to keep that balance and to try to keep both of them, um, kind of optimistic in a certain way and stay that way myself. Um, so it has been somewhat of a challenge with the immediate family.

Joy then reflected on the George Floyd effect and how it has affected Black women with Black sons differently. She mentioned her situation as a married woman with a Black son compared to my situation as a single mother with a Black son:

> And I just have to say, you know with the George Floyd thing, I, it has opened my eyes. And when I think about my friends, like you, who have, you know, who are Black women who have, who are raising Black sons, and the difference between your situation and my situation, you know… And I'm just like, what is it about this situation that these people have really – is it because everybody was at home, you know, watching it more, and kind of forced, maybe, to be involved with it than maybe they would have been? Is it the addition of the pandemic that's making people…? I don't know. It's been so strange to me.

Joy concluded her answer by entering a 3-D narrative inquiry space in recalling how she felt hurt by George Floyd and Trayvon Martin's murders, but it was more of the same pain that Black people have felt in America. Joy declared, "But for us, it's the same thing.

You know, I felt the way I did – Trayvon Martin, really – that situation, it hurt me a whole lot… And I still haven't really gotten over that." She admitted that with other murders she "kind of glossed over maybe, a little bit. Some, I'll remember their names and situations and I watch things, but I kind of walk away from it." Like her husband, Joy seems to subconsciously admit that "this happens every day. It's going to keep happening."

Lilly and her teenage daughter have also been affected by George Floyd's murder. Lilly mentioned her daughter's reaction then she described her own reactions. "I feel like my daughter, she is just really wanting to do something," Lilly admitted. She then expounded on her daughter's newfound interest in political participation:

> You know, she thinks we maybe should do this, and very much wants some change to happen and um, the political, it's like um, where there wasn't a concern as much about politics before, now, it's like the young kids are reading and knowing what's happening, the rallies – they are on it. Yes, it's definitely hit home, um, emotionally and mentally with the thought process.

Lilly's reactions were mental, emotional, and one of a sister-scholar revisiting and relearning the lived experiences of Black people in order to better explain her present lived experiences. Of her own reactions, Lilly's 3-D narrative inquiry space became quite candid as she disclosed:

> With me, I was very um, sad and tired. I felt um, an extreme exhaustion that we are still, we're still having to um, battle this in such a heavy way. It's like, progress is made but it's not even, I don't know, it's, it's hard to put into words. I was sad, I did some crying, and I did some, just um, I started to go back and look

at my roots. I went back and watched "Roots" again, and just more connection to

what – because sometimes I don't know – it'll get so far back in your, in my mind

about how we got here, what has transpired. Just, you know, not too long ago – I

mean 1960s and '70s – we weren't there long ago with some of this stuff. And so,

um, just connecting back with that, it's a range of emotions, you know.

Lilly then acknowledged the American response to George Floyd's murder as well as the

response from her Black family and friends:

So, it's been a lot of conversations with family um, members and friends, um,

African American friends and family about it. And everybody is kind of, the

response from America seems to be different this time, but a lot of [Black] people

are like, "What's happening, you know, they've been killing us all along." And

so, but this last one seems to have, I don't know – maybe the pandemic and

everybody is paying attention now more than before – so um, you know, some

things, some things are happening now that didn't happen uh, before, you know,

and I'm grateful for that, but I don't know. At the same time, it's like this, this

isn't new. You know, I'm happy that some things have started to really change,

and we've got some people recognizing you know, that, hey, it's real out here.

Asha admitted to being affected by the George Floyd effect as well. In her recollection of

the summer of 2020, it was notable that Asha mentioned someone whom neither Joy nor

Lilly had mentioned:

Yes. I think it just had a snowball effect, period, you know, in the Black

community because, and my thing, I think, that's not talked about enough, more,

is the young lady who was bold enough to video that. There's not enough talked

about her, that baby, she was a baby, seventeen years old. She had to sit there…

but she stayed and held her ground and took that video, so she's to be applauded. I

think about her and um, how brave she had to be, you know, young girl.

When I asked Asha, what made his death so different and did she think the pandemic was

a factor [I wondered if it could have been a result of the pandemic like Joy and Lilly

suggested], which forced people to largely stay inside their homes, Asha replied, "I agree

with you, that was part of it." Yet she declared, "I would call it divine intervention," as

Asha believed that his murder happened for that reason. She believes "this pandemic

happened for that reason – to be able to – maybe people had a chance to be able to

reflect."

Asha continued her analysis of the incident as it relates to the power of dialogue

and the need for all parties to be present for the conversation:

And so, I think, as far as that incident, um, if that's what it took for his life to be

sacrificed, and for him to be a martyr – for right – and to open dialogue and

conversation that's long, way long [overdue]. I've always said that the culprit

[White people] who needs to be a part of the conversation where race is

concerned was missing. They did not want to be a part of the conversation, but

until they are willing to be a part of the conversation and really have a, a real,

some semblance of understanding of what Black folk go through, or what non-

Whites go through, then this whole culture is going to continue. So, unfortunately,

he lost his life, because you know, of this situation, but it opened up a whole lot of

other opportunities for some conversation, some real conversations, for open

conversation.

Asha described the shackled American Black mind and the oppressed Black body as Black people learn to be empowered, and this requires self-valuation and self-definition, elements of Black feminist epistemology often seen as delegitimate until validated by White people:

> And I think now, a lot of Black people probably feel more empowered because, we have, to me, been in a psychological prison as it pertains to our ability to even express ourselves. And to say things that need to be said; we've been holding back. And then, of course, there are people who have been outspoken, but you know, at the same time, again, one of the dangerous things that go on in this country – until White people validate it, it's not real. And that's very unfortunate; that's a real problem. We need validation from the White man to make it so, when Black folks have been saying this from the day that we were forced in this country. So, it's heartbreaking, um, you know, we have pain that we have not dealt with as a race of people.

Like Joy and Lilly, Asha acknowledged discussing the George Floyd effect with her friends and family. She has also noticed that the dialogue has increased in various social groups for which she interacts. Asha continued her analysis of dialogue as it pertained to Black and White families in America.

Asha declared that Black families have similar familial conversations as White families. Asha noted:

> Like I said, as far as my family, we've always been very vocal in my family, and we've always had discussions about, you know, the race problem and issues, and things like that. Um, I don't know if, I just, I just feel that even more dialogue has

taken place, you know, familywise, people-wise, acquaintances at social

occasions, but I think it's similar to, you know they say White people at the

dinner table, they discuss these things – we discuss these things at the dinner table

as well.

Nonetheless, Asha charged that participation in a "beneficial dialectic" (Hagen, 1994, p. 87) is required by all parties:

Again, like I said, I think the culprit, the person who really needed to be a part of

the conversation is finally come to the realization and really being honest about

the effects of white privilege, and institutionalized racism, and systemic racism.

And I don't get why people say these things do not exist, or there is someone

trying to say something counter to that when it is – it is what it is – it's a reality.

And all Black folk, all non-Whites, are victims of institutionalized racism,

systemic racism, and white privilege, period. Enough said.

Asha believes that white privilege, institutionalized racism, and systemic racism in

America can only be overcome with the sustained participation of White people in

conjunction with Black people and other non-White people. Black people's lived

experiences in America should not require validation as legitimate knowledge outside of

the Black people who experience them. Black voices must continue to tell and retell their

stories (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), reclaiming and clarifying their lived experiences

(Collins, 2009), using a voice that now has the world's attention.

Tempered Radicalism. As Asha is a sister-scholar and one of my campus allies,

her answers took us to 3-D narrative inquiry spaces of her times as a youth activist in the

1960s and 1970s, and how she has since matured into a self-described sophisticated rebel,

a term which I found similar to the "tempered radical" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 586) mentioned in the present study. Her narrative of sophisticated rebellion deserves brief exposition.

"So, I, I, I'm a rebel in a lot of ways," Asha stated earlier in her interview. She continued, "I try to be a sophisticated rebel, I guess." She defines herself a sophisticated rebel "because I'm going to say what I need to say, but I'm not going to try to embarrass you." Asha stated that her part of Black consciousness was awakened in the 1960s and 1970s when she would hang around her cousin who was a staunch activist for civil rights. Her consciousness was further awakened when Asha began working at Mont University decades ago. Even before she worked at Mont University, Asha declared, "I hung out with my cousin who hung out with a group, an organized group, and they were college students, so a lot of my foundation came from there." Asha then began working at Mont University and her involvement in a registered student organization for Black students "really enhanced and increased my awareness for a whole lot of things, injustices and how Black people were treated."

Asha is proud of her outspokenness, but sometimes feels she is the lone voice in a sea of injustices when she admitted, "You know, what frustrates me is that there are not enough people speaking out… and I wonder why people are afraid to speak out. I don't understand it, but they are." I entered "the midst" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 43) when I admitted to Asha that I feel limited in what I can speak out about, which is one reason a tempered radical seeks to create agency within her advisees. One way to create agency is to encourage Black women undergraduate advisees to write about themselves in their classes when given the opportunity. I shared with Asha, "Advisors can create change –

social transformation, personal transformation, you know, talking through our narratives

and sharing our stories, like, not just with one another, but with our students." Asha

agreed and stated that "students should not feel uncomfortable writing about themselves,

but again, here we go again with whether or not whomever that professor or instructor is

– if they value – it's all about whether they value you."

Asha expounded on how students can engage in self-valuation through their

writings and research with the encouragement of faculty, something that does not happen

often enough in enough undergraduate classrooms at Mont University:

> Because you don't feel valued inside of the classroom, you know, because what
>
> you say, it may not lead to a further discussion or comment. And so, it's like, you
>
> get shut down, and I wonder, just over time, if this is a part, I believe, a part of the
>
> culture when you're in a predominantly White institution that, I believe, students
>
> guard themselves and they put up shields, but we need them to learn how to be
>
> bold. And to speak the truth and say what needs to be said without worrying about
>
> who might be offended, because, like you said, they don't know our story, they
>
> will never appreciate our story until we, unless we tell our story.

Asha's exposure to politics and the civics process began with interacting with her cousin

as well as Asha's interaction in high school with various other radicals – her teachers.

Asha was active in her community and in a political organization in high school, while

her cousin was active in the community and at Mont University – staging protests,

boycotts, and encouraging voting. Asha interacted with Black leaders who began vying

for political offices. As Asha recalled her activist roots, she admitted, "And you're giving

me an opportunity to really sit and think and reflect on that. That makes me who I am

now, and it impacted my whole outlook and perspective about life and people and all of that."

Asha's faith in God has also shaped who she is as a person. Her faith has allowed her to remain humble "because even through whatever challenges we face in life, I can always pray about it and I try to get my daughter to do the same thing," she says, through her tears as she becomes emotional. Asha continued about the human condition, which can present its challenges, "Everybody's struggles are different than mine though… we go through them and it doesn't take away from your struggles because they're all challenging, they are all tough, they're all difficult." However, she continued, "And you have to find a way to get through them, but I have had some amazing things that have happened in my life in spite of my circumstances, and I know it was only through, I believe, God." Asha concluded her answer of coping through difficult times by stating what I would expect an advocate – a sister-scholar – to say, "sometimes, you have to not think about what we're going through and try to help others."

Youth activism is just as prevalent now as it was when Asha was a youth activist – there are still American Black minds and Black bodies yearning to be free. Asha says, "We can't forget our youth – while we think that our youth are not doing anything – they're very productive." Asha credits her role as a sister-scholar at Mont University in keeping her connected to Black American youth activism. She charged, "I mean being at Mont University shows me what's being produced, you know, and that's happening at colleges and universities all over this country, all over the world." Much like the resistance of the controlling images of Black women, Asha resists the controlling image of Black American youth as lazy and apathetic:

They're not going to put up with your bullshit! They have a different mentality

about, and I think, just, even though the racism and systemic stuff does occur, and

they've been impacted by it too, their mentality is that they've always said, "I

wouldn't put up with what y'all put up with." And they're showing that to be true.

They're not willing to put up with the crap that we put up with, and

generationally, it's evolved. This is an evolution because we didn't put up with

what our parents put up with, and the parents before that, and before that, and

before that.

Black American youth activists are continuously developing "their power to perceive

critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves"

(Freire, 2013, p. 83). With their activism, they are also continuing to engage in

humanization – "the people's vocation" – because they yearn for freedom and justice, and

in order to reclaim their humanity (Freire, 2013, pp. 43, 44). Therefore, the Black body

and the Black mind yearning to be free are elemental to the pedagogy of freedom (Freire,

2013) sought by the oppressed Black body and Black mind in America.

Relaying Stories to Other Black women

Stories lived, told, and retold have the capacity to "educate the self and others"

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi). For Black women, stories have been told and

retold culturally, for survival – and for sister-scholars – for critical self-reflection,

professional development, and personal transformation. As mentioned in chapter one's

Introduction, Black women in America experience life differently from those individuals

"not Black and not female" (Collins, 1989, p. 747). Nonetheless, because of the

complexities of the intersectional oppressions of race and gender – and additional

variables such as class, sexuality, and ability, among others – as the narratives of Joy, Lilly, and Asha revealed, different Black women will experience similar situations differently. Consequently, as the narratives of Joy, Lilly, and Asha also "made flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39), there may be underlying patterns common within their shared experiences (Collins, 1986). As we continued to move through the questions, I asked the sister-scholars to describe how they would prepare a Black woman to work at Mont University. I also asked the participants to explain what Mont University could do to make Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates feel more included on campus. Their answers suggested that more could be done at Mont University to include professional academic advisors for undergraduates in the campus polity. Their answers also suggested that the sister-scholars have advised and shared stories with other Black women regarding professional development, and that this assistance, shared with an advisee or a Black woman colleague, can provide the sister-scholars – as reflective professionals – deep satisfaction.

Theme 5: The Sister-scholar as Reflective Professional

Although many sister-scholars are working within the margins of higher education, they continue to engage in reflective practice (Light, et al., 2009) through dyadic relationships with other Black women in higher education. This critical, reflective practice is complex in its analysis – and "complexity is dynamic" (Collins, 2019, p. 47). In applying a BFT framework in my methodology, a recurring theme was work – hard work narratives emerged and from them the deeper analytical category of Black women and their relationship with work. The intersectional methodology allowed me to discover

159

where and how Black womanhood and work narratives are being shared at Mont University.

Black women have been forced to create their own spaces (Dillard, 2000; hooks, 1994) to share their ideas and experiences. These sister-spaces allow sister-scholars to be vocal, intellectual, vulnerable, angry, joyful, and reflective. These sister-spaces allow for an engagement of shared ideas among Black women in academia. Historically, for some communities, the individual lived experiences of Black women were "meaningless without some sort of collective analytical frame through which to interpret them" (Collins, 2019, pp. 187-188). In these spaces, the framework of a Black feminist epistemology allows the sister-scholars to make meaning of their lived experiences so that the Black woman becomes an instrument in her inquiry (Piantanida & Garman, 2009), her critique, her production, and her reproduction of knowledge (Dillard, 2000).

Category: Black Womanhood and Work. Black women in America have a complex relationship with work – paid and unpaid labor. For many working-class women, they "knew from their experiences that work was neither personally fulfilling nor liberatory—that it was for the most part exploitative and dehumanizing" (hooks, 2015, p. 98). However, hooks (2015) suggested that Black women reassess work to view it as not actions done for monetary gain, but actions done to "contribute to society, to exercise creativity, [and] to experience the satisfaction of performing tasks that benefit oneself as well as others" (p. 103). I recall receiving my first paycheck from my first job as a teenager, and I told my dad how excited I was, and he said something to me that I will never forget. He looked at me and said, "It feels good to make your own money, doesn't it?" I answered, "Yes." My experiences as a laborer guided my questions for Joy, Lilly,

and Asha. I was interested to learn how they viewed Black womanhood and work, and how the sister-scholars found value in the work they do every day.

Black women engage in dialogue with one another to assist each other with job-transitioning and with being promoted in their professional lives. However, this form of intersectional leadership is underrepresented in higher education (Parker, 2001). Through data analysis, the category of Black womanhood and work emerged under the theme of the reflective professional. Joy and Lilly answered how they would prepare a Black woman to work at Mont University by providing her professional development examples that involve the hiring process. Asha answered the question by advising the Black woman to gain knowledge in other departments on campus before becoming an academic advisor for undergraduates. When I asked Joy how she would prepare a Black woman to work at Mont University, she acknowledged that her answer was from prior experience. Therefore, she initially replied with what a Black woman should not do, and she then segued into what a Black woman should do:

> Mm, done that. Um, if they're new to the University, what I would really tell them is, when you first come in, don't come in with any preconceived whatever. Learn your job. And then learn outside of your job. You know, be willing, participate in stuff, um, because wherever you start, it's like you said before, there's nowhere to go [professional academic advisor advancement in one's college or department].

Parker (2001) posited that the perspectives of Black women are invaluable to understanding contemporary leadership styles. Black women share unique advice with other Black women for personal, social, and professional transformation. Much like

161

Parker (2001), my research is situated "within a particular group of Black women" (p. 49) – sister-scholars (Jackson, 1998). Being that I am a sister-scholar seeking promotion in the academic hierarchy, I wanted to know more about how Joy, Lilly, and Asha share stories with other Black women regarding promotions and advancing in the academic hierarchy. Joy described how sister-scholars who currently work at Mont University should approach an interview for another position on campus:

> The biggest mistake that they make is that they assume, "Oh well, I work here, they know me. No. You walk into the interview like nobody knows you and you hit them with everything that you've got and that you've learned. And you're right here, don't let somebody from the outside come in and tell us about our population…You have to do that extra stuff if – your work should speak for itself, but it always doesn't. But when they come in, that's what I kind of tell them.

Again, Lilly's answer was similar to Joy as Lilly has also advised other Black women who have applied to work at Mont University; Lilly described the demeanor and professionalism needed when applying to work at Mont University:

> That's a good question too because I've had a couple of coworkers from [another institution of higher education in the southeastern region of the United States] that I was trying to bring here. And we brought a couple, even in this department, for interviews, but they didn't quite make the cut. I would tell somebody applying, that they, a Black female, that it's important for you to take the time to write your cover letter and resumé really nice and really good. And then to practice on selling yourself, showcasing enthusiasm, and um, really stepping it up. Like, when you come in the interview, you've got to have the full nine yards, the suit,

the collar jacket, um, and be impressive with state-of-the-art kind of formatting on your resumé. You've got to be able to articulate yourself very, very well. It's um, it's almost like extra…It's got to be extra in every component – like every area.

Asha would advise a Black woman seeking to work at Mont University to start by first working in other departments before applying to be a professional academic advisor for undergraduates.

Asha took us into a 3-D narrative inquiry space of her work in student affairs. Asha related her lived experiences to how similar experiences could benefit a potential sister-scholar. She stated:

> You know what, I started working in student affairs, and I think my work in student affairs gave me some, uh, a great foundation to prepare for the other role as an advisor. I still love working in student affairs, I love working with student organizations because you get, you help to mold leaders, future leaders, and the relationship is totally different working with students on a social, more of a social level or actually being a mentor to them and instilling some wisdom. It's a whole different level, compared to, I mean, we can, we um, we [advisors] influence them, but you have more time at that level [working in student affairs].

Asha believes that having knowledge from various departments on campus will allow the potential undergraduate academic advisor an experience with students that can be more of a mentor than an authoritative figure.

The sister-scholars were asked how Mont University could make sister-scholars feel more included on campus. Interestingly, all three participants mentioned the University's Black faculty and staff group that has been reactivated recently as a positive

step toward campus inclusion of Black staff such as sister-scholars. The Black faculty and staff group meet to socialize, network, and share ideas. Specifically, Lilly discussed the creation of that ethno-space as a step toward inclusion, while Asha and Joy mentioned the sister-scholar's responsibility to promote and participate in inclusive initiatives on campus.

Although Lilly acknowledged the initiatives that are starting, she also admitted, "I think that they have started, a good, I think it's just going to be slow." Lilly continued:

But they've started a good thing with at first recognizing the Black faculty and staff initiative on campus – that group getting together and reactivating – I think is one great start. I think part of what they talked about was networking and informal ways to connect, I think. Um, any way that you can get, um, I don't know, Black females together who are in leadership positions a way to casually talk without any kind of pressures.

Asha's reply was succinct, "That's kind of tough. Um, because I think that, if something is going to change, we have to do it ourselves. It may take us, you know, getting together." Like I expect of a fellow Black feminist pedagogic (hooks, 2010), Asha believes that sister-scholars themselves are the change agents on campus.

Joy answered initially by applying her response to all professional academic advisors for undergraduates and then moved into the responsibility required of sister-scholars, concluding with a 3-D narrative inquiry space of the lack of support she received when she applied for her current position. Joy began:

I think that – I don't see much difference in that in just advisors in general. I think advisors in general, um, you know, need to be seen as professionals that know

what they're doing, that should be called upon – I don't care what you're doing –

you need an advisor, you know, to be a part of your team because that perspective

you just can't, you know, do without.

Joy then segued into the personal responsibility required of sister-scholars:

When it comes to um, to us, I guess um, I think it, and here we go again, we have

to fix our own problems. I think it's more of us needing to be supportive for each

other. And you know, just not advocate for ourselves and try to advocate for

others. Because sometimes we have, we are in positions where we can advocate

for others, you know what I'm saying? If we don't do that, then that can be a

problem.

Joy continued her narrative that sister-scholars' support for each other with our various

talents is necessary to feeling included on campus because the presumptions of

incompetence that are bestowed upon sister-scholars by colleagues and some

undergraduate students remain an obstacle to inclusion. Joy concluded:

I think we can do a better job of that. Um, I don't think we support each other

enough. We don't recognize each other's talents. It's funny because when I

applied for this job, I, there were people who, you know, you'd think that support

you, and, um, it was like, "Well, I don't know if you're going to get that job

because, girl you know, they got this and they got that." And I'm just like, "Okay,

you're supposed to be, at least an acquaintance of mine, but you don't have

confidence in my abilities as a professional." It's just like when the students come

in here, they don't have confidence because I'm a Black woman – we do that to

each other as well.

Joy, Lilly, and Asha reflected on their lives as professional academic advisors for undergraduates. The sister-scholars also reflected on professional development initiatives and strategies. Although Joy agreed with me that there are not many opportunities for advancement in professional academic advising, she did note one tangible fruit of labor for which sister-scholars should attain – the doctorate in higher education. Joy stated of professional academic advising for undergraduates, "Use this as a platform to get to your next level." She continued, "Stop putting all your time and energy into this [advising]. You are not getting paid for it. Nobody cares. If you're doing extra work, it's because you're doing it." To the sister-scholar, Joy declared, "Put that stuff down. Get your work done, finish your dissertation, and you know, get this doctorate degree you're trying to get. Because all the rest of it…" I finished her sentence, "…doesn't even matter," to which Joy replied, "Right." Joy, being the pragmatic sister-scholar she is, presented the stress of professional academic advising for undergraduates while earning a doctorate in higher education as a cost-benefit analysis. She concluded, "you know, you put in all this work, stress, and strain – you're really getting the value out of it."

Category: Finding Value in Work. Nevertheless, a doctorate degree in higher education is not the sole reason that many professional academic advisors such as sister-scholars find value in work. As mentioned earlier, for the three participants, the value in work comes from a deep satisfaction in advocating for others. Joy, Lilly, and Asha have used their profession to "affirm" rather than "negate" their identities (hooks, 2015, p. 105). Although they are devalued professionals in the academic hierarchy, the sister-scholars find value in work by sharing their stories with other Black women. This is a form of resistance (Collins, 2019) because sharing stories allows Black women to self-

value and self-define us as professionals, rejecting the controlling images bestowed upon us by dominating groups (Collins, 2009). I found interesting the favorite thing about her job that each sister-scholar listed. Joy did not list students as her favorite part of the job anymore because "things have shifted over the years," but she did mention that what she does enjoy about advising is "solving a problem. It's like a puzzle every time a student comes in and you're trying to help them…," she said. However, Joy spent more time in the interviews discussing the deep satisfaction that she has in helping colleagues "achieve whatever it is they're trying to do."

Lilly listed "my coworkers and my boss" as her favorite things about her job. Lilly finds value in their relationships, and their personalities provide Lilly the "nice, positive place to work" for which she seems to flourish. Nonetheless, Lilly did admit that her advisees were "second to that or right along with that," so, she finds value in the people she is surrounded by daily and those for whom she advises. Asha listed the impact that an undergraduate academic advisor has on a student's life as her favorite part of her job. Being a catalyst in a student's transformation is the value Asha finds in her work. Asha is an engaged pedagogic who continues to learn from the students for whom she advises. Sister-scholars can find value in work by developing their "personalities, self-concepts" (hooks, 2015, p. 106), and academic philosophies using Black feminist theory as a framework.

The emergent themes all related to the research questions. Research question one asked how sister-scholars are perceiving their lived experiences. The emergent themes were academic firefighting and devalued professionals. I related these two themes to research question one because of how they represented the experiences that sister-

167

scholars have with their existing world and with their "transactions with others" which

makes up how the sister-scholars make meaning of their lived experiences and the "social

and natural worlds" (Collins, 2019, p. 172). In understanding their social selves in the

"space[s] of transaction" (Collins, 2019, p. 172), I came to understand my social self in

these spaces as I perceive them. Research question two asked how the sister-scholars find

value in their lived experiences. Collins (2019) posited, "lived experience is valued in

analyzing the meaning of events" (p. 166). As I analyzed what I interpreted (Clandinin,

2016) during the data analysis (Saldana, 2009), the themes that emerged involved

advocacy and Black American oppression.

Because of the intersectional framework of this present resistance knowledge

project, I found that the use of advocacy was ingrained in the Black American

experience, inside and outside of professional settings. I also found that the analysis for

which I engaged during the present study of experience "is of value in resisting

oppression" (Collins, 2019, p. 166). My resistance work is a fight "on behalf of freedom

and social justice for the entire Black community," as well as for my "own personal

freedom" (Collins, 2019, p. 169). Research question three asked how sister-scholars are

relaying their stories to other Black women and the theme that emerged was the reflective

professional. As I analyzed the data, I found the stories representative of "work

narratives" that provided a window into how Black women are sharing stories, where are

they sharing these stories, and what stories are they sharing in their professional settings.

I found that sister-scholars participate in sister-spaces to discuss various areas of their

lived experiences. These spaces allow for critical reflection, which is germane to being a

reflective professional.

Chapter Summary

This chapter "made flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39) the lived experiences of three Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. Five themes emerged from the narratives of the participants: (1) Academic firefighters: Sister-scholars as the problem-solvers, (2) The sister-scholar as devalued professional, (3) Advocacy and mentorship, (4) The Black body and the Black mind yearning to be free, and (5) Sister-scholar as reflective professional. Black feminist theory and narrative inquiry invited the audience into the lived experiences of Black women professionals in higher education using the themes, categories, and sub-categories that emerged. Interviews were the instruments used to solicit candid responses to how these sister-scholars find value in – and how they make practical and theoretical meaning of – their professional lives. The final chapter will conclude the study with a summary of the study, summary of the findings, discussion of the study, implications and recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 5

Introduction

This present study used a narrative inquiry research design to explore how Black women are perceiving their lived experiences in the academy of a public university. The present study explored how the stories of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates in higher education can be operationalized to promote not only the student success of Black women advisees, but to also legitimate the sister-scholar's lived experiences. This fifth chapter begins with a brief synopsis of the major findings. The chapter then moves to the discussion of the findings which is organized by the research questions as they relate to intersectionality (Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 2003) in order to acknowledge the complexity of the findings. The chapter then concludes with implications, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Synopsis of Major Findings

After analyzing the data using narrative thematic analysis, five major themes, eleven categories, and several sub-categories emerged. The five themes generated were (1) Academic firefighters: Sister-scholars as the problem-solvers, (2) The sister-scholar as devalued professional, (3) Advocacy and mentorship, (4) The Black body and the Black mind yearning to be free, and (5) Sister-scholar as reflective professional. Upon deeper analysis, several major findings emerged as they relate to the research questions for the present study. A brief synopsis of the major findings will now be discussed with a more thorough discussion of the major findings as they relate to the research questions to be provided in the next section.

The major findings revealed that professional academic advisors for undergraduates need support from their university and from the respective colleges and departments for which they work. The findings show that the various knowledges of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates are devalued. I found that the three sister-scholars felt dehumanized by staff, faculty, administration, students, and the U.S. Nonetheless, these sister-scholars are staunch advocates for undergraduates, for other sister-scholars, for their campus allies, and for people collectively. However, the findings revealed that because of high student-caseloads, professional academic advisors for undergraduates have little time to mentor their advisees. Still, the findings show that relationship-building with colleagues is germane for sister-scholars to feel included on campus; therefore, I found that that sister-scholars need mentors too. Additionally, the findings indicated that sister-scholars do engage in self-valuation through work. The findings also exposed that sister-scholars are affected by how Black people are treated in the U.S., and they are simultaneously aware that their worldviews and academic philosophies should have a home in higher education. Finally, the findings revealed that the sister-scholars bring their biases and worldviews to work *to help others* – students and colleagues.

Discussion

The purpose of this discussion is to interpret and describe the significance of my findings as they relate to what was already revealed about the research problem under investigation, and to explain any new knowledge or insights that emerged as a result of my study of the research problem. As a Black feminist pedagogic, I advocate for social change and engage in self-actualization as a practice in freedom (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003).

In keeping with the criticality of this present study, I interpreted the significance of my findings under both feminist pedagogical approaches of having a language of critique and a language of possibility (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). A language of critique allowed me to analyze the differences in power dynamics inside and outside of academia, and how these dynamics function as a form of domination (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). Because of this, I categorized the following findings as a language of critique and they were (1) sister-scholars have devalued knowledges, (2) sister-scholars experience dehumanization at work, (3) sister-scholars have little time to mentor advisees, (4) sister-scholars need mentors, too, and (5) sister-scholars are affected by how Black people are treated in the United States of America. However, the language of possibility allowed me to attempt a creation of "new forms of knowledge, grounded in principles of personal liberation, critical democracy, and social equality," so as to create new spaces for which we all can engage in forming new knowledges for the benefit of a larger democratic society (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 132) inside and outside of academia. Therefore, my findings for the language of possibility were (1) sister-scholars need support from various campus stakeholders, (2) sister-scholars are staunch advocates for others, (3) sister-scholars engage in self-valuation and resistance work in their profession, and (4) sister-scholars bring their biases and their worldviews to work to help others. As a Black feminist pedagogic, feminist pedagogy for me is more than a theory and the application of it in higher education, it is a way of life as lived personally and professionally (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). The resistance work of Black feminist pedagogics, much like the lived experiences of all Black women, is omnipresent and ongoing.

Although racism and sexism in higher education have been reorganized into different forms less explicit, this reorganization has not prevented Black women professionals in the U.S. from encountering similar yet unique experiences (Collins, 2009), which makes the application of Black feminist theory an appropriate and relevant one for which to frame this present study. Although there were only three participants, because of their varied backgrounds and diverse lived experiences, Joy, Lilly, and Asha provided nuanced responses to common situations and challenges that they experienced (Collins, 2009; Robinson et al., 2013) as Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. The collective lived experiences of these sister-scholars and the knowledges they have derived from these experiences are central to Black feminist theory's third distinguishing feature (Collins, 2009). All three participants took me to 3-D narrative inquiry spaces (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that provided insight into a Black feminist approach to academic advising undergraduates, and a BFT approach to knowledge "as a social practice deeply embedded in a particular culture" (Williams, 1993, p. 1574).

The findings revealed that Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates continue the tradition of Black women engaging in deep dialogue with one another culturally and for survival. Sister-scholars continue the tradition of inquiring into the "everyday actions and experiences" of Black women in their work (Collins, 2009, p. 37; hooks, 2015) so as to demystify (Dillard, 2000) and legitimize (Collins, 2009) these conversations. In keeping with BFT's dynamism, this present study combined BFT with narrative inquiry, narrative thematic analysis, and concepts related to academic advising for Black women undergraduates – embracing change and evolution

in thought as it relates to theory and practice (Collins, 2009). Collins (2009) charged, "as social conditions change, so must the knowledge and practices designed to resist them" (p. 43). Black feminist theory advances not only the empowerment and social justice of Black women, but it also advances the larger, global struggle for human dignity (Collins, 2009). This struggle requires active political participation on behalf of the oppressed seeking freedom from oppression. And American Black feminists view political participation as a "means for human empowerment rather than ends in and of themselves" (Collins, 2009, p. 46). Therefore, for Black women professionals in higher education, their political participation can come in the form of a pedagogy of freedom, which allows the sister scholars to engage in self-definition and self-valuation, as well as allowing them to create agency within their Black women advisees.

Sister-Scholars: Perceiving Lived Experiences

Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates have similar but not homogenous lived experiences (Collins, 2009). Parker (2001) declared the thought of a "collective women's experience" problematic (p. 48). This heterogeneity in women's lived experiences is revealed in the narratives of Joy, Lilly, and Asha. For research question one, I explored how sister-scholars perceive their lived experiences. The findings show that although the sister-scholars perceive their lived experiences as being "essential" employees, they are simultaneously devalued (Parker, 2001) by various campus entities. Although they are intricately woven into the fabric of Mont University as its problem-solvers, Joy, Lilly, and Asha still feel like the threads that hang at the intersectional margins of the quilt, out of place and with a slight pull, the quilt begins to unravel.

Relationality and Power. Two core constructs in intersectionality are relationality and power (Collins, 2019). Relationality is a core construct in intersectionality because the "term intersectionality invokes the idea of interconnections, mutual engagement, and relationships" (Collins, 2019, p. 45). This means that socially constructed systems of power such as race, gender, and class are "maintained through relational processes," becoming more defined and reified through the interaction of these relationships (Collins, 2019, pp. 45-46). Collins (2019) charged that relationality is demonstrative of how social positions can become powerful and meaningful as they relate to and interact with other social positions. Collins (2019) also stated that power is another core construct of intersectionality. Power dynamics (racism, sexism, classism, etc.) "co-produce" one another and manifest into a more complex form of intersectional oppression (Collins, 2019, p. 46). Power dynamics produce "social divisions" (Collins, 2019, p. 46) that cannot be approached from a "single-axis analysis" (Crenshaw, 2003, p. 23). As such, Joy, Lilly, and Asha's lived experiences as Black women professionals are approached from the intersections of race, gender, and class, with their profession as academic advisors for undergraduates being represented as the academic proletariats within the higher education hierarchy.

The interview questions ranged from the sister-scholars' experiences with staff, faculty, and students, to the support the sister-scholars feel campus-wide, to the aspects of the profession that they like and dislike. The three participants all gave varied answers to the same questions as the research (Collins, 2009; Crenshaw, 2003; Dillard, 2000) suggested. As a sister-scholar, Joy felt more supported by other staff on campus than she does her own colleagues in her college. Joy stated, "This staff, I don't trust them," while

Lilly and Asha felt fully supported by their colleagues in their respective colleges. Lilly

loves "my coworkers and my boss" and Asha said, "Yeah, I think I do," when asked if

she felt supported by faculty and staff. Though Asha felt supported by faculty and staff

on a campus-wide level, Joy and Lilly felt less supported by the faculty within their

respective colleges. Joy believed that faculty support in her college was "50/50…they see

us [academic advisors] …as, well, glorified, you know, 'admins,'" while Lilly admits that

faculty in her college do not like to implement the student success initiatives that "we try

to do for students." Narratives of the systems of power within the colleges of the

universities for which sister-scholars work deserve to be told and related to how these

systems of power are mutually constructed, "rooted in real material conditions structured

by social class," and materialized into how Black women professionals perceive their

lived experiences in academia (Collins, 1989, p. 758). These varied experiences are why

the stories of the sister-scholar and her "taken-for-granted knowledge" (Collins, 2009, p.

38) need to be retold (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and clarified (Collins, 2009).

Jackson (1998) posited that a Black woman's daily experiences influence "how

she understands herself as an African American woman" (p. 175). The participants were

asked questions that related to the sister-scholars' office experiences, to the favorite and

least favorite aspects of the profession, to losing an advising staff member in each

college, to working during a pandemic. Lilly and Asha mentioned their advisees as one of

the favorite parts of their job, but for Joy, the students are "not the most enjoyable thing

anymore… it's just being able to help them solve those problems." For Lilly, the least

favorite aspect of her job is the high-student caseload which prevents her from engaging

in holistic advising. Joy described her ideal academic advising experience as one where

the "advising as teaching" (Crookston, 1972/1994/2009) academic philosophy is implemented, where students are engaged in the "give and take," she said. Asha described her least favorite aspects of the job are when students lie and when students become ill and die. For Joy, her least favorite aspects of her job involve how she is perceived by others and "power." Joy felt that most of the time she is misunderstood, and her personality and assertiveness are not well-received. Parker (2001) averred that Joy's assertiveness is viewed as threatening, "defiant or not feminine" (p. 45), and therefore devalued. Joy also liked least about her profession the power of outside college entities influencing what she does day-to-day, "It's tough when you have people who really don't know, but they have enough power and influence to influence what I do."

A common element that seemed to hover in the conversations was stress. Each participant described stories that seemed to reveal that the sister-scholars were working under a high level of stress as it pertained to the expectations of their profession. Joy, Lilly, and Asha all mentioned the stress of working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic – acclimating to working from home, acclimating to the stress the students were under and the stress they were transferring to the sister-scholars, losing advising staff, and acclimating to staying safe from the virus. With losing staff comes increased caseloads of students for the sister-scholar, and this increased caseload, along with other advising duties, prevents Joy and Lilly from engaging in the academic advising philosophies for which they believe.

For the participants, they described devaluation (Parker, 2001), disrespect, and dehumanization (Freire, 2013), though Joy and Lilly's responses were from a professional perspective (Parker, 2001) of the academic advisor for undergraduates, while

Asha's response was from a larger lens of devaluation as it related to Black people in America (Collins, 2009). Nonetheless, all participants described some form of being ignored, disrespected, and dehumanized, though not necessarily at Mont University. As is the case with narrative inquiry research design, the participants told stories from temporal, spatial, and social locations (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008) to answer many of the interview questions. Joy admitted that the struggles of Black women and the presumption of incompetence (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012) experienced by many Black women professionals "doesn't bother me quite as much, I don't think as maybe some other people," and that she doesn't "mind being the token, you know, Black woman in the [room]." Yet, she expects people to understand that her outspokenness comes along with her tokenism. Nonetheless, Joy felt disrespected by supervisors who question her work ethic because, she maintained, "I feel like no other profession is treated this way." Although Lilly wanted to share what she learned at an advising conference with her colleagues, she was ignored by the staff she loves because the topic she brought back was white privilege, and "Everybody was frozen. Um, it was an uncomfortable time," she admitted. Her colleagues were not sensitive to her feelings or her "value systems" (Allen, 1998, p. 580) as a sister-scholar. Approaching the question from a larger lens, Asha charged that Black people in America have been devalued historically (Collins, 2009) and this dehumanization (Freire, 2013) has affected our collective self-esteem. And since humanization is the "people's vocation" (Freire, 2013, p. 43), Asha charged, "that's why I'm a proponent of building up rather than tearing each other down."

When I asked how the participants coped with gender and racial discrimination, the answers varied, as Walkington (2017) suggested, and this is because Black women's material reality (Collins, 2009) is not monolithic, instead it is "cross-culturally specific and historically situated," and dependent on the temporal and spatial experiences of the individual (Walkington, 2017, pp. 51-52). Joy stated that she has personally not felt racial or gender discrimination at Mont University, though she has seen other instances of discrimination with other individuals. I found this to be an unexpected finding. Lilly stated that she is non-confrontational when it comes to racial and gender discrimination; however, she is aware of the discrimination as it happens. This aligns with Allen's (1998) admission to being apprehensive to showing negative emotions in order to avoid negative stereotypes, which requires great mental energy to monitor and mask emotions. Asha was confident yet thoughtful in her answers to coping with these forms of discrimination which is a more tempered response that she attributes to her maturity (Walkington, 2017).

All participants, without prompt, mentioned the controlling images bestowed upon Black American women (Collins, 2009). The "mammy figure" (Collins, 2009; Parker, 2001), the "angry, Black woman," as well as the familial expectations of the images of the Black woman, were all mentioned and they all factor into the stress for which the sister-scholar remains under whether professionally or personally. Asha rejected the controlling images when she mentions the negative response Black women receive when they are trying to express themselves (Allen, 1998; Collins, 2009; Jackson, 1998; Parker, 2001). Joy's narrative suggested a rejection of the controlling images of the "mammy figure" and the "angry, Black woman" (Allen, 1998; Collins, 1986) that swarm around her. She chooses to define herself by turning these oppressive images into forms

of creativity as Collins (2009) stated. Of the "angry, Black woman" construct, "I actually have embraced that because I think there can be some positive connotation to it – I wrote a poem about it one time," Joy acknowledged. Joy engages in self-valuation (Collins, 2009) with the controlling images because she focuses on "the actual content of these self-definitions" to reclaim her voice and image (Collins, 2009, p. 126). Lilly, on the other hand, still seems controlled by the images of the "angry, Black woman" that she is "fearful of being," she stated. Lilly said of the "angry, Black woman" construct (Collins, 2009), "I'm pushing so far from that, that I'm kind of muted um, in a way, sometimes. Just trying to stay away from stereotypes, yeah," she concluded. The findings and the literature revealed how sister-scholars are perceiving and "successfully navigating their experiences in higher education" (Walkington, 2017, p. 52).

Sister-Scholars: Finding Value in Lived Experiences

Sister-scholars find value in their complex lived experiences. Inquiring about lived experiences allows for the analysis of "the meaning of events" (Collins, 2019, p. 166). Analyzing personal experiences as well as the experiences of other oppressed groups allows the participants and I to engage in resisting oppression (Collins, 2019). Although hooks (2015) rightly suggested that women have historically had "negative attitudes" toward work, since many adults must work in the United States, hooks (2015) further suggested that a "rethinking of the nature of work" is needed in feminist studies – a rethinking that values work (p. 105). Yet, while we work, we are still accosted with images of racial and gender discrimination and violence. The second research question explored how sister-scholars find value in their lived experiences. Acknowledging this resistance and "rethinking," the findings show that sister-scholars find value in their lived

experiences through advocating for their undergraduate advisees, their colleagues, Black women faculty and staff, and other marginalized groups. Therefore, the findings show that the participants in the present study have found value in their profession (hooks, 2015).

   Social Inequality, Social Context, and Social Justice. Social inequality, social context, and social justice are three additional core constructs in the paradigm of intersectionality (Collins, 2019). As social inequalities, race, gender, and class inequalities cannot be approached separately when analyzing Black women as these inequalities are relational and rooted in power dynamics (Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 2003) not easily demarcated based on which inequality is more prevalent than the other in any given lived experience. Social context is needed to understand how knowledge is produced among Black women and how our social locations as we move within intersecting "power relations shape [our] intellectual production" (Collins, 2019, p. 47). Social justice is a core construct of intersectionality that Collins (2019) charged is viewed as a secondary concern in contemporary scholarship. However, sister-scholars who engage in a Black feminist epistemology (Collins, 2009; Dillard, 2000) exhibit an agentic role in promoting social justice – through overt and tempered radicalism (Kezar & Lester, 2011) such as critical advising (Puroway, 2016) and feminist pedagogy (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). Although Bertrand Jones et al. (2013) also promoted BFT as an approach to advising Black women, their research focused on Black women doctoral students, and not Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. Jackson (1998) and Robinson et al. (2013) also focused their research on Black women undergraduates and not Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. Nonetheless, Black

women in all the aforementioned studies and including the present study professed similar lived experiences (Collins, 2009). Knowing this, Joy, Lilly, and Asha all professed to being staunch advocates for all their undergraduate advisees, including Black women, many of whom are plagued by the same social inequalities that plague the sister-scholar. Asha admitted to being "just an advocate for people, period," while Lilly mentioned that she advocates for students and their success in her college. Joy divulged that she advocates "for two different things, one for students and the other for staff."

The concept of advocacy is steeped in the profession of academic advising as well as in the core constructs of social inequality, social context, and social justice. The advocacy of the participants seemed steeped in their prior lived experiences as both Joy and Asha were teased during childhood, and Lilly was ridiculed by her colleagues at a prior higher education institution. Asha finds value in academic advising by advocating for all people and being a proponent of rejecting social inequalities and promoting social justice (Collins, 2019). Asha mentioned that student success should involve having "student-friendly language in our systems" – a universal design for accommodating all students in producing knowledge no matter their social location. Lilly finds value in her lived experiences by rejecting social inequality and advocating for her undergraduate advisees – often marginalized as a class of people – seeing herself in the Black women she advises, particularly, as she shows vulnerability by sharing personal stories with them (hooks, 1994). Though she has a high student-caseload, Lilly still attempts to operationalize the engaged pedagogy described by hooks (2010) by interacting with "students beyond a surface level" (p. 19). Joy advocates for students in many ways, yet in one narrative she described her advocacy from a social context as it relates to how

changes in college policies can affect students. Joy discussed how these changes can affect a student's progress toward degree completion and described her opposition to the change in a meeting with faculty – her concerns were ignored. Like Lilly and Asha, Joy produces her knowledge (Collins, 2009) from not only her social location of being a Black woman professional, but also the social location (Collins, 2019) of her students as she advocates for changes that benefit student success. Still, because of the complexities of the power structures that supervise academic advising for undergraduates, and because of high student-caseloads, the sister-scholars have less time to mentor their advisees as they do advocate for them.

Nonetheless, with this discussion of advocacy for their advisees came the dialogue of the advocacy and mentorship that is experienced by the sister-scholars. All three participants mentioned narratives of their first job at Mont University and how they formed relationships with various people. Joy met a Black woman faculty member and then met a Black woman staff member who invited Joy to join "a group of them that would get together, and it just happened to be all Black females that knew each other, somehow, someway…" she stated. Lilly mentioned two Black women professionals that befriended her, one taught her "systems" and the other Black woman taught Lilly how to navigate "in corporate America" much like Parker (2001) suggested in her discussion of the benefit of having and learning from Black women in leadership positions. Asha mentioned her mentor as a Black male with whom she still keeps in contact years later. Black women also learn from and continue to be mentored by Black men (hooks, 2015).

However, these Black men and Black women in America are still Black bodies and Black minds yearning to be free, which is the fourth theme derived from the data

analysis. During the interview process in late 2020, the sister-scholars were all working remotely and still struggling to adjust their personal, professional, and political lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. George Floyd had been murdered in May 2020. Joy, Lilly, and Asha all engaged in dialogue regarding his murder and how the sister-scholars were managing their intersectional identities while still working as professionals. Freire (2013) described a liberation pedagogy that first unveils the oppressive world structure with the oppressed committing to their transformation through praxis, and then seeks to transform the oppressive structures so that permanent liberation becomes familiar to all people, not just the oppressed (Freire, 2013). Freire believed the relationships among power structures such as "education, politics… and liberation" are inseparable from the human condition (McLaren, 2000, p. 141). Therefore, I explored how or if the sister-scholars were processing dehumanization as it related to the American Black body and Black mind.

The sister-scholars were all deeply affected by the murder and they had all discussed the incident with their families, yet the sister-scholars had to keep working. Interestingly, Joy, Lilly, and Asha took me to their 3-D narrative inquiry spaces of time, place, and sociality (Clandinin, 2016) to answer their questions. Therefore, their narratives represented each inquiry space described by Clandinin (2016). Joy described the 3-D narrative inquiry space (Clandinin, 2016) in her narrative as she recalled Trayvon Martin's murder and described the difference in response from her son and her husband, as well as how she navigates through all of their emotions. Lilly described a 3-D narrative inquiry space (Clandinin, 2016) in that she felt anger, sadness, and a need to relearn parts of her history. Lilly has also a teenage daughter who has become more politically active.

Asha's 3-D narrative inquiry space (Clandinin, 2016) took me alongside her to discuss the brave videographer of George Floyd's murder (a young Black woman), to Trayvon Martin, to the "culprit who needs to be a part of the conversation (White people)," and to the "psychological prison" of the American Black mind yearning to be free. Nevertheless, the data analysis revealed that George Floyd's murder has allowed Black and non-Black people to engage in a "beneficial dialectic" (Hagen, 1994, p. 87). Still, Joy, Lilly, and Asha all questioned how long this engaged conversation would last. This present study seeks to continue the dialectic.

Sister-Scholars: Relaying Stories to Other Black Women

Research question three explored how sister-scholars relay their stories to other Black women in academia. The sister-scholars relay their stories to other Black women using sister-spaces. These spaces entail building relationships with other employees on campus as well as spaces where sister-scholars can share scholarship, share advice, and engage in everyday conversations (Collins, 2009; Riessman, 2008). Most importantly, these spaces allow for sister-scholars to engage in resistance work by retelling (Clandinin, 2016), reclaiming, and clarifying their stories as legitimate knowledge (Collins, 2009). hooks (2015) posited, "women of color and all women from non-privileged backgrounds who are well-educated… must share their awareness with all women" (p. 115). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) charged that stories lived, told, and retold have the capacity to "educate the self and others" (p. xxvi). Therefore, the stories of the sister-scholar deserve to be told and retold (Clandinin, 2016), and consequently demystified (Dillard, 2000).

Complexity. Complexity is also a core construct in intersectionality (Collins, 2019). Collins (2019) posited that "intersectional knowledge projects" are complex "because they are iterative and interactional," analyzing relationships between topics that are seen as distinct (p. 47). Like BFT, "complexity is dynamic" (Collins, 2019, p. 47). Collins (1986) declared that Black women in America experience life differently from those "not Black and not female," and the complexity of the intersectional oppressions such as race, gender, and class means that Black women will also experience similar situations differently (Collins, 2009; Collins, 2019). Joy, Lilly, and Asha gave varied answers to similar questions, and the more they disclosed parts of their personal lives, and the more the data was analyzed, the more their varied answers made sense to me. The sister-scholars have shared stories (Clandinin, 2016; Collins, 2009) with other Black women and these shared stories have provided Joy, Lilly, and Asha deep satisfaction. Therefore, complexity was used as a core construct in this intersectional knowledge project of reifying the narratives of the sister-scholars.

The sister-scholars show that their knowledge is rooted in not only their intersectional characteristics, but also in the knowledge of the academic advising profession. As I relayed the study back to the experiences of the participants using a 3-D narrative inquiry space, I came "to understand in deeper and more complex ways" how the lived experiences were relevant to the research questions (Clandinin, 2016, p. 50). Joy, Lilly, and Asha viewed relationship-building (hooks, 2015) as essential to Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates feeling included on campus. The sister-scholars extended these essential relationships to Black women and White women on campus in various departments that the sister-scholars have deemed their

186

campus allies. However, all three participants mentioned the Black faculty and staff group at Mont University as a great way to bring Black professionals on campus together to share ideas and research, no matter their gender identification.

Nonetheless, Joy, Lilly, and Asha provided thoughtful narratives on their lived experiences (Clandinin, 2016) with academic advising as a profession, providing a window into how they advise students. Williams (1993) proposed a new strategy for academic advising that focused on knowledge, understood as a socially constructed "practice deeply embedded in a particular culture" (p. 1574). Joy admitted that she would love a "give and take" during the academic advising session where "knowledge flow[s] in both directions" (Williams, 1993, p. 1575). Lilly and Asha are engaged pedagogics when showing their vulnerable side by sharing personal narratives with their advisees (Williams, 1993). Asha also engages in a "beneficial dialectic" (Hagen, 1994, p. 88) by embracing objectivity and subjectivity as she projects rationality and emotion (Williams, 1993) when she advises Black women advisees. The findings show that sister-scholars find value in work because they ultimately bring their biases and worldviews to work to help others. Therefore, the worldviews and academic philosophies of sister-scholars deserve legitimation (Collins, 2009).

Implications for Theory

Finally, this study revealed evidence that supports the significance of applying Black feminist theory (BFT) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in higher education. The present study shows that Joy, Lilly, and Asha engage in self-definition and self-valuation as ways to reclaim (self-value) their voices and images (Collins, 2009) by defining themselves (self-definition) through resistance strategies such

187

as being outspoken, being creative (Collins, 2009), being silent (Houston & Kramarae, 1991; Shorter-Gooden, 2004), or for Lilly in particular, engaging in career socialization (Glenn, 2012). BFT allowed me to incorporate intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2003; Collins, 2019) into the analysis because the "interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression" (Collins, 1986, p. 19) requires complex analysis. The data analysis revealed professional academic advisors for undergraduates as the academic proletariat – the dehumanized, working class employees surrounded by additional workplace power structures in the forms of students, faculty, and administration. Black feminist theory also allowed the narratives of the sister-scholars to be "made visible" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 49) as they related to the American Black mind and Black body yearning to be free. The present study revealed the significance of Black women's culture and how these sister-scholars make meaning of their lived experiences – assisting students, advisors, and colleagues, building relationships with various people on campus, being a mentor to another sister-scholar, being an advocate for others, engaging in critical advising, being an advocate for social justice – intersecting experiences created by their social locations (Collins, 2009), "material conditions" (Mullings, 1986, p. 13), and being "Black and female" (Collins, 1989, p. 747; Robinson et al., 2013, p. 60). Analyzing their narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) allowed the findings to be revealed.

Implications for Practice

The findings for the present study have implications for undergraduate academic advising as a profession. As the literature suggested, Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates appear to have heterogenous lived experiences in higher education (Allen, 1998; Crabtree & Sapp, 2003; Collins, 1986/2009; Robinson et al.,

2013), which necessitates the continued exploration of their lived experiences. Although all three participants mentioned feeling included on campus as Black women professionals in general, their narratives largely covered the devaluation of professional academic advisors for undergraduates overall. Therefore, it appears that Mont University could do more to make professional academic advisors for undergraduates feel included on campus. One form of inclusion – and as a means of professional development – is to invite more professional academic advisors for undergraduates to participate in more non-advising committees and campus-wide initiatives on campus. Academic advising for undergraduates is a stressful profession and Joy and Lilly admitted to having high-student caseloads that prevent their implementation of their academic advising philosophies such as "advising as teaching" and holistic advising respectively. High student-caseloads also prevent their ability to mentor their undergraduate advisees. These caseloads increase when an undergraduate academic advisor leaves the college or department, often without being replaced. The colleges and departments at Mont University should consider hiring more undergraduate advising staff to allow professional academic advisors for undergraduates the time to practice in their academic philosophies.

The sister-scholars all mentioned building relationships as necessary to feeling included on campus, again, with each mentioning the Black faculty and staff group on campus. It seems that creating spaces for Black faculty and staff is necessary for these Black professional academic advisors for undergraduates to feel included on campus. These spaces allow for the flourishing of the relationship-building and the mentorship of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates. The participants engaged in self-valuation and self-definition (Collins, 2009) through work, which

suggests that operationalizing BFT in the advising session, and academic advising using "alternative theoretical traditions" (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, p. 5) such as critical advising (Puroway, 2016) and engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) are possible. Further research is needed to analyze the full implication of how alternative forms of academic advising can be operationalized with undergraduate advisees for student success, retention, and graduation (Baer & Duin, 2014). The present study provided a "language of critique" and a "language of possibility" (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p. 132) for Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates, and for additional benefactors such as other undergraduate academic advisors, Black women advisees, and other campus stakeholders interested in student success, retention, and graduation (Baer & Duin, 2014).

Limitations

The limitations of this present study included time constraints and small sample population. Because of time constraints, I was only able to conduct two interviews for each participant. I would have chosen to interview the participants over consecutive spring, summer, and fall semesters. The study was also limited in that there were a small number of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates to interview at Mont University compared to non-Black professional academic advisors for undergraduates, furthering the significance of the current study, as part of its critique is the scant representation of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates.

Recommendations for Further Research

Advancing the topic for the study can allow for a foundation on which to buttress additional research regarding intersectionality in higher education. As such, there are many topics for further research based on the findings of this present study. This topic can be advanced as it relates to finding value in the narratives of Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates in higher education. It would be fitting that such transformative learning – "making meaning of one's experience" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 84) – continue with the exploration of Black women laborers, much like how Mezirow began his inquiry into transformative learning decades ago (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). However, research that expands beyond the academic advising concept – such as how Black women professionals operationalize predictive analytics, to how Black women professionals build online course content using an intersectional framework – may prove valuable places for continued exploration of Black women professionals in higher education.

Additionally, advancing the topic for the study can allow for additional research regarding alternative strategies for undergraduate academic advising. Although critical advising (Puroway, 2016) was discussed as a strategy, the operationalization of the strategy, and the data collection and data analysis that can be gleaned from utilizing this strategy deserve more exploration. Because critical advising involves reflection from the professional, an exploration of how critical advisors operationalize experiential learning by using "reflection-in-action" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 116) – which could expound on work regarding how adult educators can operationalize the theories and concepts we value – could be another way to advance the topic. Therefore, research on

student success, retention, and graduation (Baer & Duin, 2014) can also be advanced by this topic because of its practical discussion of applying various academic advising strategies and concepts. The topic can be advanced to accommodate non-Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates (including men and non-gender identifying persons) so as to assist them in advising undergraduate students of color and other marginalized undergraduates. And it can also be advanced to promote more research on the personal narratives of Black and non-Black professional academic advisors for undergraduates. Both of these advancements could be approached from a humanist adult education framework (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The data collection and data analysis from studies of critical advisors and undergraduate advisees could add to research on "problem-posing education," in effect humanizing "action" by making it the subject of reflective, intersectional resistance projects since reflection is essential to action (Freire, 2013, p. 83).

Concluding remarks

This present, qualitative study sought to "make flesh" (Freire, 2001, p. 39) the lived experiences of the sister-scholar (Allen, 1998). The chapter began with a summary of the study, which included a synopsis of the major findings. The chapter then discussed intersectionality using the themes derived from the data analysis. In keeping with the complexity of intersectional knowledge projects (Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 1995/2003), Black feminist theory (BFT) and narrative inquiry were used to show how sister-scholars can engage in critical advising to assist Black women advisees in conscientization (Freire, 2013), and to assist the sister-scholar with self-definition and self-valuation as a form of social and personal transformation.

In the discipline of adult education, Lindeman (1926) viewed experience as a learner's best instrument. However, reflective professionals are typically viewed separately from who they are as individuals with unique lived experiences, worldviews, and biases (Brookfield, 2001). Yet, Joy, Lilly, and Asha seemed to use their biases, value systems, and worldviews to *help others*, and not just other Black women. Therefore, the sister-scholar can benefit personally and professionally by bringing her personal self with her to her professional setting. This benefit, manifested in various forms, one of which is the "beneficial dialectic" (Hagen, 1994, p. 88), assists both the sister-scholar and her advisee in conscientization (Freire, 2013).

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Appendix A:

Interview Questions

Research Question 1: RQ1

Research Question 2: RQ2

Research Question 3: RQ3

Interview Question: IQ

RQ1: How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates perceiving their lived experiences?

IQ1.   Typical day: What is a typical day like for you? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

IQ2.   Video camera question: If I were to follow you with a video camera during your time at home or in your job, what would I see? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

IQ3.   What is your favorite thing about your job? Family life? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

IQ4.   What is your least favorite thing about your job? Family life? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

IQ5.   Definition question: What is your definition of being a Black woman? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

IQ6.   What do you consider the daily struggles of Black women? (Jackson, 1998)

IQ7.   How do you respond to unfair treatment? (Shorter-Gooden, 2004, p. 411) Do you accept is as fact of life, or do something about it? Do you talk to someone about it, or do you keep it to yourself?

IQ8.   Recall a specific event: Tell me about the last time you felt ignored at this institution. (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

IQ9.   Recall a specific event: Tell me about the most recent time that you felt your voice was heard at this institution. What was the topic about? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

IQ10.   Overall, do you feel visible on campus as someone with a valuable opinion, or have you considered this at all (before you heard this question)? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

IQ11.   What are some problems that you see on this campus (academically or professionally)?

IQ12.   What are some of the problems that you see in the Black community in America?

IQ13.   Do you feel supported by staff and/or faculty on campus as a Black woman academic advisor? How have you been supported and by whom?

IQ14.   Does working in a predominantly White institution (PWI) affect your demeanor in regard to your own professionalism, your ethnicity, or your gender? Why or why not?

IQ15.   Has an issue come up at work where you felt your White woman colleague came to your defense? Describe the situation. How did this experience make you feel?

IQ16.   What about a situation where a White woman colleague did not come to your defense? Describe the situation. How did this experience make you feel?

IQ17.   Do you believe that people expect you to negotiate and compromise your

identity professionally or personally as a Black woman? How does that make you

feel? (Glenn, 2012)

IQ18.   Have you ever had to deal with prejudice or discrimination because you

are Black? Please give an example.

IQ19.   Have you ever felt that you needed to change the way you act in order to

fit in or to be accepted by White people? Please give an example.

IQ20.   How do you cope with gender discrimination? (Shorter-Gooden, 2004, p.

414) Have you ever had to deal with discrimination because you are a woman?

Please give an example. When you are around Black men, do you ever feel that

you need to downplay your abilities and strengths? Please give an example.

IQ21.   What leadership organizations are you a part of a Mont University? Did

you volunteer or were you chosen by someone else? If chosen, why do you think

you were chosen?

IQ22.   How has the pandemic (working remotely due to COVID-19) affected

your work schedule? Family life? How have you coped with these life

adjustments?

IQ23.   Have any of the current events in America (George Floyd's murder and

subsequent protests, etc.) affected you or your family? How so?

IQ24.   Three questions used to learn about overall coping strategies with bias and

oppression (Shorter-Gooden, 2004, p. 414). How have you been affected by

negative stereotypes? What are the major difficulties that you face as a Black

woman? Please give an example. As a Black woman, what helps you "make it"? What helps you get through the difficult times?

RQ2: How do Black woman professional academic advisors for undergraduates find value in their lived experiences?

    IQ1.   Please recall a specific event where you have had to teach yourself something (inside or outside of academia). What were the results?

    IQ2.   What would you like to experience during academic advising?

    IQ3.   Do you have a campus ally (allies)? How was this relationship formed?

    IQ4.   What could be done to make Black women academic advisors for undergraduates feel more included on campus?

RQ3: How are Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates relaying their stories to other Black women in academia?

    IQ1.   Referral/Recommend Question: How would you prepare a Black woman to work at Mont University? (Johnson, 2017, p. 87)

    IQ2.   What personal or professional advice would you give to a Black woman academic advisor for undergraduates?

    IQ3.   Has your intersectional identity (being Black and a woman) influenced your advising style with Black female undergraduate advisees? How?

    IQ4.   Are you outspoken at any of the leadership meetings for which you are a part? If so, who do you find yourself speaking on behalf of – your students, yourself, fellow staff, or any combination of these?

IQ5.   Describe a situation ("good" or "bad") where you have had a thoughtful

and realistic conversation with a Black woman undergraduate student

struggling personally or academically.

Appendix B:

Recruitment Communication

Volunteers wanted for a research study

Lead Investigator: Danesha Winfrey

The purpose of this study is to explore qualitatively the lived experiences of Black female professional academic advisors in higher education.

The experiences of Black female professional academic advisors for undergraduates will be the focus of the research. The research will take approximately three to six months to complete. Over the course of the three to six months, the research with the lead investigator will consist of two in-person (physical or through web conference according to COVID-19 safety guidelines) interviews lasting one to two hours for each interview. The criteria for eligibility is that the participants are Black female professional academic advisors for undergraduates currently being advised at the University of Memphis. There are no direct benefits from participating in this study. There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, some people have experienced personal benefits when engaging in dialogue about their personal experiences. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society better understand this research topic.

Compensation for participation is not provided. Participation is strictly voluntary. To learn more about this research, please contact the lead investigator, Danesha Winfrey, 901.678.4594, or at dnwnfrey@memphis.edu. The lead investigator is located in 218 Brister Hall, University College, at University of Memphis's main campus. This research is conducted under the direction of the College of Education, University of Memphis. (If interested, please read and sign the attached Consent Form). Thank you.

Respectfully,

Danesha Winfrey

<center>**Appendix C:**</center>

<center>**Informed Consent Form**</center>

<center>Consent to Participate in a Research Study</center>

<center>**Sister-Scholar: Making Flesh the Lived Experiences of Black Women**</center>

<center>**Professional Academic Advisors for Undergraduates**</center>

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about Black women professional academic advisors and their lived experiences. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a Black woman professional academic advisor for undergraduates. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of three (3) people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is **Danesha Winfrey** (*Lead Investigator, LI*) of University of Memphis. She is being guided in this research by *Dr. Wendy Griswold* (Advisor). There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study. Danesha Winfrey (dnwnfrey@memphis.edu) is located in 218 Brister Hall, University of Memphis phone number 901.678.2176. Dr. Griswold is located in 123G Ball Hall, University of Memphis, and her email is wgrswold@memphis.edu.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to explore qualitatively how Black women professional academic advisors for undergraduates are perceiving their lived experiences in the academy of a public university.

By doing this study, the researchers aspire to qualitatively examine how the stories of Black women professional academic advisors in higher education can be operationalized to promote not only the student success of their Black women advisees, but also to promote the personal transformation of the Black woman professional academic advisor for undergraduates.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will **not** lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. **You can stop at any time** during the study **and keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. If you decide not to take part in this study, your decision will have <u>no</u> effect on the quality of academic advising that you receive**. As a student, if you decide not to take part in this study, **your choice will have no effect on your academic status or your academic advising experience**. Again, your participation is strictly voluntary.

Please answer "yes" or "no." _____

Under the age of 18?

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research procedures will be conducted at the College of Professional and Liberal Studies located on the main campus of the University of Memphis or by using video conferencing according to COVID-19 procedures detailed by IRB. You will need to either come to a video conferencing invitation, or come to **218 Brister Hall, College**

of Professional and Liberal Studies, University of Memphis at the main campus,

once, at most twice during the study. Each of those visits will take about 60-120 minutes.

The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 2-4 hours over

the next three to six months.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

The participant will be asked to participate in no more than two interviews, either

in person, or using a video conferencing software approved by the University, depending

on the participant's availability.

Interviews and answering open-ended, qualitative questionnaires will be utilized

as part of the research process.

There is no randomization process used during this study. All data collected from

surveys will be collected in a secure Qualtrics database only accessible by the

researchers. The data will have any identifying information of the participants removed

(anonymized).

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of

harm than you would experience in everyday life.

You may find some questions we ask you to be upsetting or stressful. If so, we

can tell you about some people who may be able to help you with these feelings.

In addition to the risks listed above, you may experience a previously unknown

risk or side effect.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, some people have experienced personal benefits when engaging in dialogue about their personal experiences. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. If you decide not to take part in this study, your decision will have no effect on the quality of academic advising that you receive. As a student, if you decide not to take part in this study, your choice will have no effect on your academic status or your academic advising experience.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you give came from you.

Participation information will be reported in the aggregate. No identifying information will be collected in the interview process, and any identifying information will be removed before the data is stored. Data from the interviews will be entered into a database and the original copies destroyed. Any recordings from the interviews will be transcribed and the original recordings destroyed. Data will be scrubbed of any identifying characteristics, such as proper names, place names, et cetera. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms, which will be known only to the lead researcher. Data will be stored on a qualitative data management and analysis program (NVIVO). Access to this program will be limited to the lead researcher and stored on password protected computers and storage devices.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study, you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you, if they find that

your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you, or if the agency funding the study decides to stop the study early for a variety of scientific reasons. There are no consequences for withdrawing or from being withdrawn from the study. The procedures for withdrawal are simply for the participant to cease participation.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Danesha Winfrey, at 901.678.4594 or dnwnfrey@memphis.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT IF NEW INFORMATION IS LEARNED DURING THE STUDY THAT MIGHT AFFECT YOUR DECISION TO PARTICIPATE?

If the researcher learns of new information in regards to this study, and it might change your willingness to stay in this study, the information will be provided to you. You may be asked to sign a new informed consent form if the information is provided to you after you have joined the study.

What happens to my privacy if I am interviewed?

Identifying information learned during the interviews will be separated from and not associated with the responses said during the interviews. Pseudonyms will be used to protect any identifying information of the participants.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to cease participation in this study at any time. You can also be provided another copy of this consent form should you misplace it. You can contact the IRB (contact information above) to obtain another copy of this consent form.

_____   _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent   Date

Appendix D:

IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board
Division of Research and Innovation
Office of Research Compliance
University of Memphis
315 Admin Bldg
Memphis, TN 38152-3370

PI: Danesha Winfrey
Co-Investigator:
Advisor and/or Co-PI: Wendy Griswold
Department: Leadership, Users loaded with unmatched Organization affiliation.
Study Title: Critical advising: Operationalizing the data gleaned from academic analytics
IRB ID: PRO-FY2019-32
Submission Type: Renewal
Level of Review: Expedited

IRB Meeting Date:
Decision: Approved
Approval Date: July 20, 2020

Research Notes:
Findings:

The IRB has reviewed the renewal request. The University of Memphis Institutional Review Board, FWA00006815, has reviewed your submission in accordance with all applicable statuses and regulations as well as ethical principles.

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

1. If this IRB approval has an expiration date, an approved renewal must be in effect to continue the project prior to that date. If approval is not obtained, the human subjects consent form(s) and recruiting material(s) are no longer valid and any research activities involving human subjects must stop.

2. When the project is finished a completion form must be completed and sent to the board.
3. No change may be made in the approved protocol without prior board approval, whether the approved protocol was reviewed at the Exempt, Expedited or Full Board level.
4. Exempt approval are considered to have no expiration date and no further review is necessary unless the protocol needs modification.
5. Human subjects training is required every 2 years and is to be kept current at citiprogram.org.

Thank you,
James P. Whelan, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
The University of Memphis.
Note: Review outcomes will be communicated to the email address on file. This email should be considered an official communication from the UM IRB.