Black Women Community College Professors’ Perceptions of Relational Mentoring and Achieving Tenure

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Black Women Community College Professors' Perceptions of Relational Mentoring and Achieving Tenure

Abstract
This interpretative phenomenological study used theoretical and conceptual frameworks based on critical race theory and relational cultural theory. The purpose was to analyze and understand the perceptions of seven tenured Black women community college professors regarding relational mentoring, navigating barriers, and achieving tenure at a large public university system in the northeastern United States. The underrepresentation of Black women faculty members can be attributed to factors that affect the tenure process, including: gendered racism, social isolation, unreceptive and alienating campus climates, lack of access to research opportunities, discredited scholarly research, increased teaching and service committee assignments, and lack of mentoring. Based on the findings of this study, mentoring and networking programs can help to address and eliminate barriers, and provide support and access to Black women community college faculty members, as well as contribute to the recruitment and retention of minority faculty members. For institutional leaders, this research offers insight into the plight of Black women community college professors as they navigate a tenure process that represents institutional and organizational norms that are entrenched in systemic racism and sexism.

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Black Women Community College Professors’ Perceptions of Relational Mentoring and Achieving Tenure

By

Tameka Sherée Battle

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Anthony P. Chiarlitti

Committee Member

Dr. Jacqueline J. Jeffrey

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

August 2020
Dedication

First, I give God all the honor and praise for all He has done in my life. I thank God for the strength, courage, and faith to endure such a journey as this. This entire dissertation is dedicated to my friend, husband, and soulmate, Eric Burkett. Babe, I could not have done this without you by my side. I thank my children, Jazmyn, Eric II, and Jordan, for their patience, love, and support throughout this process. I also dedicate this dissertation to my late father-in-law, Rev. Dr. Gilbert N. Burkett, and my late mother, Thea Elnora Battle, who instilled in me at a very young age that I was brilliant, strong, and beautiful all the way through. Thank you, Mommy, for your love, support, and guidance.

I thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Anthony Chiarlitti, and committee member, Dr. Jacqueline Jeffrey. You both challenged me to push through and stretch beyond what I thought I did not have in me. I am grateful for your patience and guidance throughout this process.

Dr. Janice Kelly, thank you for your support and helping me to celebrate my dissertation milestones and to “trust the process.” To my mentors, Dr. Karen Williams, Dr. Nireata Seals, Dr. Jerrell Robinson, and Dr. Jeanine Molock, you all have shaped and molded me to be the leader I was destined to be with your time, love, support, and guidance. Dr. Michael Baston, I thank you for introducing me to St. John Fisher College. You were exactly where God wanted you to be.
To my sorority sisters of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., words cannot express the gratitude and love I have for each one of you. “We help each other” is what you have demonstrated throughout this journey. To my Bridge Church of Long Island, Inc. church family, Pastor Dan Quagliata, Jill Quagliata, and my life group, you helped to fuel my soul with your prayers, love, and support. Thank you to everyone who has helped me make it to the finish line in this journey.

To my cohort, Cohort 10 (New Rochelle), I will miss all the laughs, hugs, tears, and cheers. My team, United Committed Change Agents (UCCA), I love every single one of you. The relationship we formed and bonds we created are unbreakable. UCCA will forever be in my heart!

Last, thank you to the seven brilliant, Black women scholars who participated in this study. Your stories are your truth. Your contribution to this study is invaluable.
Biographical Sketch

Tameka S. Battle is currently an associate professor in the Health Sciences Department at City University of New York, LaGuardia Community College. Ms. Battle attended Lincoln University (PA), graduating in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Therapeutic Recreation. She completed her Master of Arts degree in Therapeutic Recreation Administration and Services in 1998 from New York University. Ms. Battle came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2018 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Battle pursued her research on the perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure among Black women community college professors in an urban college setting under the direction of Dr. Anthony P. Chiarlitti and Dr. Jacqueline J. Jeffrey and received the Ed.D. degree in 2020.
Abstract

This interpretative phenomenological study used theoretical and conceptual frameworks based on critical race theory and relational cultural theory. The purpose was to analyze and understand the perceptions of seven tenured Black women community college professors regarding relational mentoring, navigating barriers, and achieving tenure at a large public university system in the northeastern United States.

The underrepresentation of Black women faculty members can be attributed to factors that affect the tenure process, including: gendered racism, social isolation, unreceptive and alienating campus climates, lack of access to research opportunities, discredited scholarly research, increased teaching and service committee assignments, and lack of mentoring.

Based on the findings of this study, mentoring and networking programs can help to address and eliminate barriers, and provide support and access to Black women community college faculty members, as well as contribute to the recruitment and retention of minority faculty members.

For institutional leaders, this research offers insight into the plight of Black women community college professors as they navigate a tenure process that represents institutional and organizational norms that are entrenched in systemic racism and sexism.
# Table of Contents

Dedication .................................................................................................................................................. iii  
Biographical Sketch .................................................................................................................................... v  
Abstract .................................................................................................................................................... vi  
Table of Contents ....................................................................................................................................... vii  
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................................... x  
List of Figures ............................................................................................................................................. xi  
Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1  
  Problem Statement ...................................................................................................................................... 4  
  Theoretical Rationale ............................................................................................................................... 6  
  Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................................................. 8  
  Statement of Purpose ............................................................................................................................... 13  
  Research Questions ................................................................................................................................. 14  
  Potential Significance of the Study ....................................................................................................... 15  
  Definitions of Terms ............................................................................................................................... 16  
  Chapter Summary .................................................................................................................................... 18  
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature ......................................................................................................... 20  
  Introduction and Purpose ....................................................................................................................... 20  
  Underrepresentation of Black Faculty .................................................................................................... 21  
  Barriers Faced by Black Faculty ........................................................................................................... 29  
  Racial and Institutional Climate ............................................................................................................. 34
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origin and Definitions of Mentoring</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature on Mentoring in Higher Education</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Mentoring</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages of Mentoring Relationships, Programs, and Support Networks</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Context</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Participants</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments Used in Data Collection</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Results</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Participants</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis and Findings</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Results</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Discussion</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of Findings</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.1</td>
<td>The Five Good Things: Outcomes of Growth-Fostering Interactions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>Interview Questions Aligned to Research Questions</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2</td>
<td>Mentoring Definitions – Codes, Categories, and Themes</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3</td>
<td>Relational Aspects of Mentoring</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4</td>
<td>Mentoring Relationship – Length of Relationship and Formality of Relationship</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5</td>
<td>Role of Mentor – Frequency of Responses</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6</td>
<td>Outcome Measures Influenced by Mentoring</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7</td>
<td>Navigating Barriers in Academia</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Percentages of Full-Time Faculty in Postsecondary Institutions by Academic Rank, Ethnicity, and Sex</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2</td>
<td>RCT Model of Relational Mentoring</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Results from Participant Response to the MES</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

Before the year 2044, almost 50% of the U.S. population will belong to a minority group (Colby & Ortman, 2014). As the nation’s demographics are rapidly changing, it is imperative that degree-granting postsecondary institutions explore ways to diversify the faculty to reflect the diverse student population. Many institutions, through their mission statements, have signified their commitment to embracing a diverse, pluralistic community that represents an environment for students of various cultures, ethnicities, backgrounds, and identities to learn and succeed. As colleges and universities attempt to examine ways to diversify the faculty through recruitment and retention efforts, the fact remains that diversifying faculty is a challenge (Allen et al., 2000a). Turner (2003) noted that “although some progress has been made in diversifying the faculty despite years of affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation, the recruitment and retention of faculty of color remains one of the most difficult challenges facing American higher education” (p. 113).

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in fall 2017, the number of full-time faculty, including the titles of professor, assistant professor, associate professor, instructor, lecturer, visiting professor, adjunct professor, and interim professor, in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, was 1.5 million (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2019). From fall 1999 to fall 2017, the total number of full-time faculty members increased by 49%. In addition, from 1999 to 2017, the percentage of full-time female faculty members increased from 41 to 50% (USDOE,
Despite this increase over an 18-year period in public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit degree-granting institutions, the number of Black full-time faculty members remains abysmally low. In 2011, data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) indicate the total number of full-time Black faculty members was 6%, and the total number of full-time Black faculty members with the rank of professor was 4% (USDOE, 2013). Additionally, in 2016, IPEDS data indicate the number of full-time Black faculty members was 3% for Black males and 3% for Black females, with the total number of full-time Black faculty members with the rank of professor remaining the same as that of 2011 at 4% (USDOE, 2018). Further analysis of data reflects the decrease in the total number of full-time Black female faculty members. Turner et al. (2011) also noted that the number of full-time Black female faculty members decreases as professorial rank increases.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the percentage of full-time faculty in postsecondary institutions in the fall of 2017, by academic rank, ethnicity, and sex. This highlights the number of full-time Black female faculty members with the rank of lecturer and instructor at 4%, the rank of assistant professor at 3%, the rank of associate professor at 2%, and the rank of professor at 1%.

The American College on Education reported in 2019 previous data from IPEDS (2005), which indicate a vast majority of community college, full-time faculty members were White. Of the 122,000 full-time faculty members at 2-year public institutions, 77.8% were White, compared to 7.4% who were Black (Espinosa at al., 2019). In contrast, a study conducted by the Association for the Study of Higher Education (2007) reported that the representation of minority faculty is significantly lower.
In 2018, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) study reported that the number of tenure-track faculty in 2-year institutions accounted for less than 20% of all faculty positions (AAUP, 2018). Research data from the NCES highlighting differences in tenure status by race, ethnicity, and sex indicate that White faculty members were more likely to report having tenure than Black faculty members (Nettles & Perna, 1995). The underrepresentation of Black faculty in higher education
continues to be a persistent problem at most U.S. colleges and universities, particularly at predominantly White institutions (Allen et al., 2000a; Tillman, 2001; Turner et al., 1999).

**Problem Statement**

Over a 5-year period, from 2013 to 2018, the number of full-time Black faculty members, across genders, represented 6% of the nation’s collegiate professoriate (USDOE, 2013, 2018, 2019). An analysis of the racial composition of community college faculty based on data from the IPEDS, in 2016, indicated that White full-time community college faculty represented 77% of the professoriate, compared to 7.4% of Black full-time community college faculty (Espinosa et al., 2019). A review of the literature on recruitment, retention, and mentoring of Black faculty members reveals that the underrepresentation and low academic rank of Black faculty members continues to be a problem in American colleges and universities, thus hindering recruitment efforts (Allen et al., 2000a). Espinosa et al. (2019) highlighted over 200 indicators on the status of race and ethnicity in higher education. Data indicate that the U.S. population will continue to become increasingly more ethnically and racially diverse. Espinosa et al. (2019) recommended that the diversity should be reflected in the faculty within higher education. Espinosa et al. (2019) also noted that despite the shift in the demographic landscape in higher education, including public 2-year colleges, community college faculty members are less diverse than the student populations.

The underrepresentation of Black women faculty members has been attributed to factors and barriers within the academic workplace. Barriers, such as gendered racism, social isolation, unreceptive and alienating campus climates, lack of access to research opportunities, discredited scholarly research, increased teaching and service committee
assignments, and lack of mentoring, can hinder the tenure process for Black women and minority faculty members (Aguirre, 2000; Allen et al., 2000a, 2000b; Arnold et al., 2016; Frazier, 2011; Gregory, 1999, 2001; Smith et al., 2006; Tillman, 2001; Wilder et al., 2013). Research conducted since 2005 has suggested that the tenure and promotion rates of African Americans and people of color—in all types of institutions—has been staggeringly low, forcing many to leave the academy before being tenured and promoted (Tillman, 2001). One possible factor in the failure of Black faculty members achieving tenure and promotion is the role mentoring plays in a Black faculty member’s professional development. Tillman (2018) noted:

Mentoring can be used as a key strategy for increasing the diversity of the professoriate, increasing the number of pretenure faculty of color who are promoted and tenured, and decreasing the number of faculty of color who leave the academy. (p. 15)

A close examination of the literature on mentoring excludes scholarly research on the perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure by Black women community college faculty members. Findings from further examination of Black women community college faculty members may help to contribute to the body of scholarly research literature that could reveal possible barriers Black women community college professors face during the tenure and promotion process by using an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach to examine tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure (Craddock, 2016; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016).
Theoretical Rationale

Critical race theory (CRT) examines the role race and racism play within social constructs. CRT emerged from the critical legal studies (CLS) movement in the 1960s. CRT is centered on experiential knowledge and objects to the dominant culture’s ideology. CRT includes a framework designed to examine race and its intersectionality, with racism embedded into the dominant social, legal, and institutional structures, by putting into action interdisciplinary and intersectional methodology to examine inequality (Solórzano, 1997). Solórzano (1997) defined CRT as “a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of People of Color” (p. 6). Taylor (1998) noted “as a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT challenges the experience of Whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual foundation in the distinctive experiences of people of color” (p. 122). CRT is made up of five tenets: (a) the permanence of racism, (b) Whiteness as property, (c) interest convergence, (d) the critique of liberalism, and (e) counter-storytelling (Hiraldo, 2010). The first tenet, permanence of racism, suggests that racism permeates the social, political, and economic aspects of society. The second tenet, Whiteness as property, views Whiteness as a property interest and possession that only Whites can enjoy, use, pass down, and include or exclude as a sense of entitlement. The third tenet, interest convergence, exposes advancements designed to benefit people of color that ultimately benefit White people. The fourth tenet, critique of liberalism, a form of color-blindness, challenges the neutrality of the law and allows institutions and people to ignore racist policies that promote social and racial inequality. The fifth tenet,
counter-storytelling, is explored as a way to disrupt the dominant narrative through the construction, formulation, and exchange of stories by people of color to highlight their personal experiences (Delgado, 1989; Hiraldo, 2010; Kelly et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

CRT also plays a major role in exposing the hidden and blatant social inequities in higher education. In 1995, CRT was further developed in the field of education by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate. CRT in education recognizes that racism is embedded within the culture of the U.S. educational system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Critical race theorists in education contend that experiential knowledge and the lived experiences of people of color are vital to eliminating, revealing, and addressing racial oppression and subordination experienced by people of color (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Huber, 2008; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-storytelling has been used in autobiographical scholarly research detailing personal narratives and perspectives that illustrate sexism, racism, and other barriers faced by Black women in academia (Davis et al., 2011b; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Pittman, 2010; Sulé, 2014).

In this current study, the researcher examined the tenets of CRT to highlight the systemic and endemic structures of racism embedded in academia. The researcher used the counter-storytelling tenet of CRT to highlight the voices and experiences of Black women community college professors through the lens of examining the intersectionality of race, gender, racism, power, and other forms of oppression that marginalize people of color within education (Smith et al., 2007; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).
Conceptual Framework

In the early 1980s, Jean Baker Miller, a psychoanalyst and director of the Stone Center at Wellesley College, and colleagues Irene Stiver, Janey Surrey, and Judith Jordan developed the relational-cultural theory (RCT) model to provide a different perspective of examining human growth and relational development. RCT, as a framework, was initially proposed to examine the psychological development of women based on Miller’s (1987) seminal work. RCT reaffirms the needs and concerns of women and challenges the assumptions of traditional psychotherapy models (Fletcher et al., 2000). RCT’s focus is based on the premise that developing meaningful interpersonal relationships is essential to human growth and development through the formation of dynamic and interchangeable human connections (Gunderson et al., 2018; Neukrug, 2015). RCT, from a feminist and cultural approach, provides a phenomenological perspective that gives voice to the experiences of marginalized women who desire relational connectedness with others (Jordan, 2017). The theory and practice of RCT has evolved to incorporate cultural and social justice perspectives to contextualize the diverse experiences of women impacted by racism, sexism, and discrimination (Comstock et al., 2008; Frey, 2013; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016).

RCT emphasizes the need for individuals to “grow through and toward connection throughout our lives” (Jordan, 2000, p. 231). Further, RCT examines the relational connections that are formed in human interactions (Jordan, 2000; Miller, 1987). Characterized by the principle that all humans long for the need to be connected, RCT is rooted in the assumption that meaningful and shared connections with others fosters the development of a “felt sense of self” (Jordan, 1997, p. 15). Jordan (2000) emphasized the
importance of recognizing the metaphor of “self.” The emphasis of self, often used to pathologize women in the context of being dependent, insufficient, and deficient beings, led RCT researchers to acknowledge and support the autonomous, self-sufficient, and independent attributes of women using their voices to understand the intersectionality of race, culture, sexuality, and sociopolitical “ways of being” in society (Jordan, 2000, p. 1006).

Jordan and Hartling (2002) asserted growth results from individuals yearning to be relationally connected with others. Growth-fostering relationships are developed “through mutual empathy and mutual empowerment” (Jordan & Hartling, 2012, p. 3). Frey (2013) outlined four characteristics that describe growth-fostering relationships:

(a) mutual engagement and empathy, defined as mutual involvement, commitment, and sensitivity in the relationship, including a willingness to impact and to be impacted by another person; (b) authenticity, defined as the freedom and capacity to represent one’s feelings, experiences, and thoughts in the relationship, but with an awareness of the possible impact of this authenticity on the other person; (c) empowerment, as defined as the capacity for action and sense of personal strength that emerges from the relationship; and (d) the ability to express, receive, and effectively process diversity, difference, and/or conflict in the relationship, and to do so in a way that fosters mutual empowerment and empathy. (p. 178)

The convergence of growth-fostering and interpersonal relationships that are developed provide a mutual benefit for all involved in those relationships (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). Frey (2013) further explained that in RCT, connection develops in relationships
that coalesce and unite around specific relational characteristics. Conversely, disconnection, either voluntary or involuntary, occurs in the absence of interpersonal connections, resulting in isolation. Jordan (2017) suggested “relational-cultural theory proposes that isolation is one of the most damaging human experiences which is best treated by reconnecting with other people” (p. 266). The Fletcher and Ragins (2007) study on relational mentoring argued that RCT’s distinctive “delineation of the processes, outcomes, characteristics, and skills associated with relational interactions highlights the microprocesses within social interactions that lead to developmental outcomes” (p. 376). Relational mentoring typifies relational conditions found in high-quality mentoring (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). Relational mentoring is defined as “an interdependent and generative developmental relationship that promotes mutual growth, learning and development within the career context” (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007, p. 374). The RCT model of relational mentoring analyzes organizational and cultural contexts based on (a) relational conditions/stance, (b) relational skills, (c) relational behaviors and processes, (d) contextual factors, (e) mentoring episode outcomes, and (f) mentoring relationship outcomes as perceived by the participants (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Figure 1.2 illustrates The Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of relational mentoring supporting the study’s conceptual framework.
Miller and Stiver (1997) suggested “five good things” (p. 386) that occur as a result of mutual and growth-fostering interactions. Table 1.1 identifies the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) five good things that are characterized as outcomes of growth-fostering interactions.
Table 1.1

*The Five Good Things: Outcomes of Growth-Fostering Interactions*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zest</td>
<td>Connection with the other that gives both members a sense of increased energy and vitality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowered Action</td>
<td>Motivation and ability to put into practice some of what was learned or experienced in the relational interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Sense of Worth</td>
<td>Increased feelings of worth that come from the experience of having used one’s “self-in-relation” to achieve mutual growth in connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Relation-in-Relation Esteem)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Knowledge</td>
<td>Learning that comes from the ability to engage in “fluid expertise,” fully contributing one’s own thoughts and perspectives while at the same time being open to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for More Connection</td>
<td>A desire to continue this particular connection, leading to a spiral of growth that extends outward beyond the initial participants.</td>
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RCT is made up of three key tenets: (a) interdependent self-in-relation, (b) specific criteria define growth-fostering interactions, and (c) systemic power. Understanding the complexities women face in growing through and toward connections within social and cultural constructs, RCT has been criticized for the theory’s development by and for White, middle class women (Alvarez & Lazarri, 2016; Frey, 2013; Jordan, 2017; Jordan & Hartling, 2002). Enns (2004) argued the application of RCT could be integrated with African American values that support and “emphasize interdependence, collective goals, and a unifying spiritual orientation” (p. 178). Alvarez and Lazarri (2016) further supported the appropriateness of RCT as a foundation for mentoring in academic settings. Beyene et al. (2002) concluded that mutuality, empathy,
and relational connections are significant elements of mentoring relationships that are transforming and liberating for both mentors and protégés.

The previous research of Kram (1983), Kram and Isabella (1985), and Kram and Higgins (2008) describes the one-dimensional process of mentoring whereby developmental assistance is provided by an individual with more experience and seniority to support the growth and development of individuals in the early and middle career stages. There have been recent paradigm shifts from the traditional to the relational perspectives on mentoring to highlight the role mentoring can play in developing interpersonal relationships, enhancing one’s professional career, and increasing opportunities for success (Alvarez & Lazarri, 2016; Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). In higher education, applying RCT in mentoring relationships was suggested as benefiting Black women faculty members as they navigate hostile climates and barriers to professional success (Alvarez & Lazarri, 2016; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Turner, 1985; Turner et al., 1999). This researcher used the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of relational mentoring to examine (a) relational conditions, (b) relational skills, (c) relational behaviors and processes, (d) contextual factors, (e) mentoring episode outcomes, and (f) mentoring relationship outcomes to demonstrate the quintessence of high-quality mentoring among Black women community college professors.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. Interpreting the experiences of Black women faculty members can contribute to the growing body of literature that places the
experiences and culture of an ethnic group at the center of research inquiry (Tillman, 2002). Researchers have suggested that understanding the experiences of Black women faculty in mentoring relationships could lead to the development of institutional policies designed to support the trajectory of leadership pathways, maintain or improve current mentoring programs, and restructure environments that traditionally support institutional racism, discrimination, and gendered practices (Frazier, 2011; Tillman, 2002, 2018). Washburn (2007) noted, “women have fewer mentors and face greater professional isolation, slower rates of promotion, and increased likelihood of leaving an institution before gaining tenure than do their male counterparts” (p. 57). Achieving tenure represents success in academia through which mentoring has been found to be a contributing factor (Diggs et al., 2009; Zambrana et al., 2015). This study will contribute to the body of scholarly research on the mentoring experiences of tenured Black women faculty members. The narratives and perspectives of tenured Black women community college professors, using counter-storytelling, will help to highlight unique personal, social, and cultural contexts vital to developing insight into the issues faced by Black women faculty members (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Subsequently, the emergence of CRT can be useful in examining the policies and perspectives intended to address retention, recruitment, mentoring, and tenure of Black women faculty members (Grant & Simmons, 2008; Griffin et al., 2011a; Kelly & McCann, 2014).

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of
relational mentoring and achieving tenure. The following research questions were used to
guide this study:

1. How do tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring?
2. What relational aspects of mentoring are significant in achieving tenure?
3. How are outcome measures associated with tenure influenced by mentoring relationships?
4. How do mentoring relationships help navigate barriers (potential and/or actual), if any, in academia?

**Potential Significance of the Study**

Levin et al. (2014) posited that diverse faculty attracts, retains, and mentors diverse students, and diverse faculty members are instrumental in the development of community college environments that value diversity. Additionally, Black faculty members have a significant impact on positive student outcomes, retention, and mentoring experiences of students (Barnett, 2011; Chang, 2005; Griffin & Reddick, 2011b). Black faculty members, as significant contributors to the success, engagement, and mentoring of minority students, nonetheless, remain underrepresented in community colleges. Despite the contributions Black faculty members offer to community colleges, there is a lack of scholarly research on the lived experiences of this population (Levin et al., 2013, 2014; Malcom, 2013).

Mentoring plays a significant role in the tenure and promotion of African American faculty. Tillman (2018) suggested mentoring as a strategy for the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, which would help to contribute to the increase in the
number of faculty of color achieving tenure and promotion and decrease the number of faculty of color choosing to leave the academy. Findings from Tillman (2001) indicate “there is a scarcity of literature that addresses mentoring for African American faculty” (p. 300). Frazier (2011) identified, in her single case study of an African-American female tenure-track faculty member, the barriers African-American faculty members face including “academic bullying” (p. 2) and how barriers impact a faculty member of color’s ability to achieve tenure and promotion. Frazier (2011) concluded that “research focused on effective mentoring models that allow African-American faculty to balance the needs of psychosocial development with professional development to aid in successful navigation of tenure and promotion should also be studied” (p. 11). Additionally, this study could potentially benefit community colleges seeking to diversify the faculty body and address institutional barriers to the tenure process for Black women faculty members. Understanding and analyzing the perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure among tenured Black women community college professors could lend valuable insight into the formation of (a) institutional and departmental mentoring programs, (b) faculty support networks, and (c) institutional policies designed to support the recruitment, retention, professional development, and successful tenure of Black women faculty members.

**Definitions of Terms**

*Black* – of or relating to African American people or their culture (Black, 2009). The term Black and African American is used interchangeably and synonymously throughout this study.
Community College – defined as regionally accredited institutions that primarily award the associate degree as the highest award (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) – a theoretical framework that examines the role race and racism play within social constructs (Hiraldo, 2010).

Faculty – term used to describe a community of teachers and scholars with teaching as the primary professional role and responsibility (Block et al., 2015).

Mentor/Mentoring – “a process by which persons of superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégé” (Blackwell, 1989, p. 9).

Relational-Cultural Theory – a theoretical framework that examines the interpersonal connections formed in human interactions (Jordan, 2000; Miller, 1987).

Relational Mentoring – “an interdependent and generative development relation that promotes mutual growth, learning and development within a career context” (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007, p. 374).

Tenets of CRT – (a) counter-storytelling, (b) the permanence of racism, (c) Whiteness as property, (d) interest convergence, and (e) the critique of liberalism (Hiraldo, 2010).

Tenure – a process that provides job security, protects academic freedom, and guarantees that one cannot be terminated without just cause.

The City University of New York (CUNY) – the largest urban, public university system in New York State and the United States comprising 11 senior colleges, seven
community colleges, and seven honors and professional schools across the five boroughs of New York City (CUNY, 2017).

*Woman* – an adult female person (Woman, 2009). The terms female and women are used interchangeably throughout this study.

**Chapter Summary**

In fall 2017, the number of full-time faculty members was 1.5 million. In addition, over an 18-year period, the number of full-time female faculty members increased by 9%. Despite the increase in full-time faculty members, including full-time female faculty members, the number of full-time Black faculty members remains low. Similarly, the number of full-time White faculty members in community colleges significantly surpasses the number of full-time Black faculty members. The racial composition of community college faculty, based on data from the IPEDS, in 2016, indicated that White, full-time, community college faculty represented 77% of the professoriate, compared to 7.4% of Black full-time, community college faculty (Espinosa et al., 2019). In contrast, research indicates the number of Black faculty members across the nation has decreased steadily over the years (USDOE, 2019). The number of full-time Black faculty members, across genders, represents only 6% of the nation’s collegiate professoriate (USDOE, 2019). Diversifying faculty, more specifically Black faculty members, has been a challenge. Turner (2003) noted, “the recruitment and retention of faculty of color remains one of the most difficult challenges facing American higher education” (p. 113). Tillman (2001) concluded that research conducted since 2005 indicates that “African American faculty are severely underrepresented in higher education and particularly in predominantly White institutions” (p. 295). Research has
suggested the underrepresentation of Black women faculty members is attributed to factors and barriers within the academic workplace. Barriers, such as gendered racism, social isolation, unreceptive and alienating campus climates, lack of access to research opportunities, discredited scholarly research, increased teaching and service committee assignments, and lack of mentoring can hinder the tenure process for Black women and minority faculty members (Aguirre, 2000; Allen et al., 2000a, 2000b; Arnold et al., 2016; Frazier, 2011; Gregory, 1999, 2001; Smith et al., 2006; Tillman, 2001, 2018).

Research consistently indicates institutional barriers within higher education play a significant role in a Black faculty member’s tenure and promotion. This study will contribute to the body of scholarly literature by exploring the phenomenon of underrepresentation and perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure based on the lived experiences of Black women community college professors.

The remainder of this study is divided into four chapters. Chapter 2 is a literature review of the summary, analysis, and synthesis of empirical research related to the underrepresentation of Black faculty; barriers faced by Black faculty; the origin and definitions of mentoring and relational mentoring; and the advantages of mentoring relationships, programs, and support networks. Chapter 3 summarizes the overall research study design, the research context, the research participants, the procedures used in data collection, and the procedures used to analyze the data. Chapter 4 presents the study’s major findings in alignment with the study’s research questions. Chapter 5 emphasizes the implications of the findings, the limitations of the study, and the researcher’s recommendations for future studies.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. In order to gain an understanding of the experiences of tenured Black women community college professors’ experiences, the research study focused on the participants’ definition(s) of mentoring prior to and after being mentored, aspects of relational mentoring significant in achieving tenure, outcome measures associated with tenure that are influenced by mentoring relationships, and how mentoring relationships help navigate barriers, if any, in academia.

This literature review is divided into four sections and provides a summary, analysis, and synthesis of the peer-reviewed empirical research. The first section includes the underrepresentation of Black faculty members in U.S. colleges and universities. The second section includes existential evidence on barriers faced by Black faculty members within academia, including experiences with racial and institutional climates on college campuses. The third section explores the origin and definitions of mentoring, literature on mentoring in higher education, and relational mentoring. The fourth section includes research underscoring the advantages of mentoring relationships, mentoring programs, and support networks for Black women faculty members.
Underrepresentation of Black Faculty

Recruitment and retention are important to colleges and universities as they attempt to diversify faculty. Previous research studies have examined recruitment and retention of faculty of color in predominantly White institutions (Abdul-Raheem, 2016; Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Stanley, 2006). In fact, there is an assumption that hiring a substantial number of faculty of color will address all diversity issues (Dade et al., 2015). Bowers (2002) suggested an overabundance of research drawing attention to community colleges’ need to increase the number of faculty of color to accommodate the increased number of minority students enrolled in community college. In fact, 2-year colleges have indicated higher percentages of Black and Hispanic faculty than 4-year colleges (Espinosa et al., 2019).

Racial inequity has been cited as one of the primary reasons for the underrepresentation and low academic status among African American faculty in U.S. higher education (Allen et al., 2000a; Gregory, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy & Addison-Bradley, 2005; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Ponjuan et al., 2011). Current research literature on recruitment, retention, and mentoring of Black faculty members reveals that the underrepresentation and low academic rank of Black faculty members continue to be a problem in American colleges and universities (Allen et al., 2000a; Dancy & Brown, 2011; Tillman, 2001, 2018). A diverse body of faculty members contributes to increases in student achievement, an enriched intellectual environment, opportunities for student mentoring and counseling, and students’ access to role models (Robinson et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2004; Stanley, 2006; Turner, 2003).
Allen et al. (2000a) noted that African American higher education faculty members in six predominantly White Midwestern campuses were underrepresented and significantly disadvantaged in the areas of faculty workload, faculty satisfaction, teaching responsibilities, and job satisfaction. The purpose of the Allen et al. (2000a) study was to highlight the disparities between African American and White faculty members in representation, tenure status, and overall access and success within the institutions. Examining the perspectives of African American faculty underscores the challenges in the recruitment, retention, and success of African Americans in U.S. colleges and universities.

The Allen et al. (2000a) study selected three private and three public institutions for the study. These institutions made notable achievements in increased enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of African American students. Questionnaires were mailed to 1,189 college and university faculty members from the six selected institutions. The respondents represented African American faculty ($n = 35$) and White faculty ($n = 1,024$). The researchers noted that the number of African American respondents, compared to White respondents, was significant to their study when highlighting the underrepresentation of African American faculty members in colleges and universities within the United States. African American female faculty members represented the smallest group in the sample, and they were outnumbered by African American male faculty members (2.5 males to one female). White female faculty members outnumbered African American male faculty members by a factor of 10, and African American male faculty members were outnumbered by White male faculty members (2.5 White males to one African American male).
The Allen et al. (2000a) data was compared by race and gender using univariate and bivariate statistics. The findings reveal that African American faculty members’ rank held and tenure status was significantly lower in number of years worked at their institutions compared to their White colleagues (1.76 years versus 2.44 years). Allen et al. (2000a) suggested that differences in the fewer mean years could possibly represent newly recruited African American faculty. In the study, 41% of African American faculty members held the rank of assistant professor compared to 25% of White faculty with the rank of assistant professor. The number of White faculty members with the rank of full professor was 40% compared to 24% of Black faculty members with the rank of full professor. Black women faculty members with the rank of full professor was 11% compared to 20% of White women faculty members with the rank of full professor. These findings are significant as Allen et al. (2000a) asserted, “in the prestige hierarchy of the U.S. professoriate, the rank of professor is a highly valued, powerful status level in which African American faculty members continue to be vastly underrepresented” (p. 113).

The measures used in the Allen et al. (2000a) study examined background factors, intervening factors, and outcome factors. Two specific outcome measures of interest to the researchers were faculty workload and faculty satisfaction. Faculty workload measured the average number of hours per week spent teaching, conducting research, and participation in administrative/committee work. Faculty satisfaction measured satisfaction with salary, faculty resources, and institutional leadership. With respect to faculty workload, the African American faculty taught 24.1 hours per week compared to 22.8 hours per week for White faculty. Teaching responsibilities over a 5-year period
revealed that 49% of Black faculty members compared to 29% of White faculty members taught only undergraduates. In addition, Black faculty taught fewer graduate classes and more Black students than their White colleagues. Faculty satisfaction revealed 37% of White faculty members expressed the highest level of satisfaction with their institutions, while 23% of Black faculty members expressed satisfaction with their institutions. Satisfaction with salaries indicated that 60% of the Black female faculty members were dissatisfied with their salaries compared to 37% of the White male faculty members and 44% of the White female faculty members. Allen et al. (2000a) noted in their study the marked differences in teaching responsibilities, hours devoted to committee work, research time commitments, and research productivity by race and gender. African American faculty experienced significant disadvantages on all measures, which can result in challenges to the recruitment, retention, and success of African American faculty in U.S. colleges and universities (Allen et al., 2000a). In addition, the researchers asserted that variances in teaching responsibilities, workload, and job satisfaction could possibly be the result of institutional norms and practices (Allen et al., 2000a). Allen et al. (2000a) concluded that the data used in the study were not conclusive enough to test the hypothesis of elite racism, an assertion made by the researchers. The findings in the study confirmed racial disparities within the academy continue to serve as a hindrance in the success of Black faculty, undergirded by systemic discrimination and deprivation of the scarce commodity of Black faculty.

In a similar, but more comprehensive study, Turner et al. (1999) examined the challenges to the recruitment, retention, and development of African Americans, Latinos, and Native American faculty members (termed faculty of color) from 487 college
campuses in eight states within the Midwestern Higher Education Commission from 1993 to 1995. Turner et al. (1999) conducted an exhaustive review of the literature and identified six barriers to the recruitment and retention of faculty of color: isolation and lack of mentoring, occupational stress, the “token hire” misconception, racial and ethnic bias in recruiting and hiring, and racial and ethnic bias in tenure and promotion practices and policies.

Turner et al. (1999) used a mixed methods research design to examine the extent faculty of color within the Midwestern colleges and universities were underrepresented, the factors that contributed to their underrepresentation, the institutional supports that were provided for faculty of color, the perspectives of faculty of color that could contribute to successful strategies, and existing programs that could contribute to the recruitment of minority faculty.

The study used data from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the federal census to create a restricted definition of faculty of color. The sample included 1% of responses from the 1990 census. From that sample, Turner et al. (1999) were able to identify faculty members over the age of 24 years and less than 70 years of age, with a master’s degree or with a Ph.D. degree. Individual and group interviews were conducted with a total of 64 faculty members of color. Questionnaires were also forwarded to 713 nonprofit institutions of higher education, with a return rate of 68% (487 surveys). Institutions in the study were identified as 36% 2-year colleges, 37% 4-year colleges, 11% universities, 10% professional schools, and 6% were classified as other. Using purposive sampling, a survey was administered to institutional participants to share their perceptions on issues of faculty development, priorities for
minority faculty recruitment and retention, turnover rates of faculty and administrators, and institutional difficulties in hiring and retaining minority faculty. In addition, a review of 26 existing programs that contributed to the recruitment of minority faculty were reviewed.

Findings from the Turner et al. (1999) study on the underrepresentation of minority faculty revealed that African American, Native American, and Latino faculty members are underrepresented in Midwestern colleges and universities. In investigating the factors that contributed to the underrepresentation of faculty members of color, three factors were revealed: pipeline problems, market-forces problems, and “chilly-climate” problems. Turner et al. (1999) further concluded that, as a result of minority students dropping out of the pipeline at various career stages, the results show an increase in the number of unqualified candidates of color for faculty positions and a decrease in the number of degrees attained by African Americans at the bachelor’s level and a drop at the master’s and doctorate level for Latinos. However, the Turner et al. (1999) study indicated strikingly opposite participant results in Asian Pacific Americans with increases in degree attainment at all levels. Turner et al. (1999) also utilized data from the 1991 National Research Council Survey of Doctorate Recipients to note striking differences in earned wages among faculty of color. Turner et al. (1999) noted that African Americans earned the lowest wages in the Midwest, compared to states in the Eastern, Western, and Southern United States. Latinos earned lower wages in the Midwest, compared to the rest of the nation. The findings from the research revealed Asian Pacific American faculty earned the highest wages of all minority groups in the Midwest and the entire nation. Turner et al. (1999) ascertained that the eight states included in the study conferred
almost 23% of all doctoral degrees. Of the doctoral graduates from the Midwestern colleges and universities, 63.5% sought careers in job markets in other areas of the nation, while 66.7% of minority doctorate graduates sought careers in job markets in other areas of the nation compared to 63.1% of the White doctoral graduates.

Turner et al. (1999) suggested that pipeline and market-force problems are external factors that affect the recruitment and retention of minority faculty. Institutional climate, an internal factor, also affects the number of minority faculty in higher education (Turner et al., 1999). Comparisons can be seen between Spann’s (1990) study and the Turner et al. (1999) study acknowledging that faculty members identified a supportive environment as the primary factor in determining success in academia. The Turner et al. (1999) findings reported five participants indicating that they were aware of ongoing racial and ethnic biases in their institution, but they stated they never experienced racial or ethnic discrimination personally. Turner et al. (1999) concluded that while the participants within the study expressed barriers, such as “handicaps of isolation, lack of information about tenure and promotion, unsupportive work environments, gender bias, language barriers, lack of mentoring, and lack of support from superiors” (p. 41), 95% indicated that they planned to remain in academia. Overt and covert forms of racial bias and discrimination, including being passed up for tenure and promotion or being informed to seek tenure and promotion in other institutions, are experienced by Black faculty female members and contribute to a “chilly-climate” (Johnsrud & Sadeo, 1998; Kelly & McCann, 2014; Stevenson, 2012; Turner et al., 2011).

Results from the Turner et al. (1999) study presented institutional support as the top priority by institutional leadership in the professional development surveys that were
administered to 713 institutions of higher education. Major obstacles reported by respondents included (a) lack of qualified candidates, (b) underrepresentation of minority faculty, and (c) insufficient salaries. Based on findings from the Turner et al. (1999) study interviews with faculty members of color, faculty perspectives that could contribute to successful strategies include a positive professional work environment, faculty development, mentoring, and support for research and publishing. One limitation noted in Turner et al.’s (1999) study was the responses from the institutional leadership could be interpreted as a matter of opinion, and they did not represent faculty responses.

The findings in the studies of Turner et al. (1999) and Allen et al. (2000a) highlighted the importance of disaggregating data based on race and gender when examining the experiences of faculty of color. Research suggests the underrepresentation of Black faculty members is attributed to factors and barriers, such as racial and ethnic discrimination, racism, lack of access to information on tenure and promotion, lack of mentoring, and lack of professional development opportunities (Johnsrud & Sadeo, 1998; Kelly & McCann, 2014; Stevenson, 2012; Turner et al., 1999; Turner et al., 2011). As a result, Black faculty members have lower academic ranks and are less likely to achieve tenure, hindering recruitment and retention efforts (Allen et al., 2000a, 2000b; Turner et al., 1999; Turner et al., 2011). Researchers have maintained that White faculty members have been more successful at obtaining tenure compared to minorities. This phenomenon, they contended, is the result of the tenure process and the lack of mentoring (Abdul-Raheem, 2016; Allen et al., 2000b; Dancy & Brown, 2011; Turner et al., 1999). Graduate fellowships, financial incentives, and mentoring and network programs can address and
eliminate those barriers, provide support, provide access, and provide greater opportunities for the recruitment of Black faculty members.

**Barriers Faced by Black Faculty**

Scholarly research, publication, teaching, service, advising, and mentoring students are noted as responsibilities of all U.S. faculty members (Aguirre, 2000; Allen et al., 2000a; Allen et al., 2018; Potter et al., 2011). Frazier (2011) noted, in her single-case study of an African American female tenure-track faculty member in the Counselor Education Department at Palmetto University, that the barriers African American faculty members face include lack of personal time, challenging institutional climate, lack of mentoring, and difficulty navigating the promotion process. The aim of Frazier’s (2011) study was to define the term “academic bullying” and how it impacted a faculty member of color’s ability to achieve tenure and promotion. A significant finding from the Frazier (2011) study revealed that the participant expressed being provided with ineffective mentoring. Furthermore, the participant was assigned a mentor who had no previous experience with successfully mentoring untenured faculty, in addition, to the mentor also being untenured. Frazier (2011) concluded that “research focused on effective mentoring models that allow African American faculty to balance the needs of psychosocial development with professional development to aid in successful navigation of tenure and promotion should also be studied” (p. 11).

Allen et al. (2000a) found that the two key obstacles that restrict African American female faculty members from moving up in academic hierarchy are “(a) the tendency of African American faculty to be overburdened with teaching and service responsibilities, and (b) the inflexible expectations of universities and colleges about
research and publication” (p. 192). Alfred (2001) noted in her study, using a bicultural framework to examine the professional development history of five tenured African American women at a predominantly White institution, that alienation, marginalization, and isolation are frequently experienced by Black female faculty members. Black female faculty members often assume multiple academic roles, such as teacher and trusted colleague, faculty advisor, community advocate, and involved committee member (Gregory, 2001).

Gregory (1999) conducted a seminal study of 384 Black female faculty members, nationwide, to examine factors that influence career mobility and the role those factors play in success and achievement. The dependent variables in Gregory’s (1999) study were the decisions of Black female faculty to remain, return to, or voluntarily depart from their present institutions. Eight variables were identified and examined to determine their influence in the decisions of the Black female faculty. The findings in Gregory’s (1999) study noted that teaching was the primary work activity, among Black female faculty members employed at 4-year colleges and universities, followed by research, and administration. Additionally, the respondents noted higher levels of teaching, student advisement, and committee work than their White, male colleagues, which decreased their chances of receiving tenure and served as an impediment to engaging in research and scholarly publications. Gregory’s (1999) study confirmed that Black female faculty members employed at 2-year colleges reported teaching as their primary work activity with little or no emphasis on research.

Aguirre (2000) noted in a monographic seminal study examining the underrepresentation of minorities and women in higher education some of the barriers
faced in the academic workplace. Social isolation, service and teaching, and discredited research are areas in which minority faculty must navigate in order to attain tenure. Tenure, a reward all faculty members seek to receive, is often difficult for minority faculty to obtain. Aguirre (2000) noted, “tenure not only endows with institutional permanency in academia but also serves as a signal for other faculty that the recipient’s academic work is meritorious” (p. 31). Aguirre (2000) highlighted that feelings of social isolation are frequently experienced by minority faculty, which excludes them from interactions that are important in obtaining resources and rewards, thus impacting the development of mentoring relationships and opportunities for success. Aguirre (2000) asserted that time spent advising students, teaching, and committee work are significantly higher for minority faculty members than White faculty members, which could impact the minority faculty members’ chances for tenure and promotions. A key finding in the Aguirre (2000) study is a description of how discrediting the research of minority and women faculty members can also discredit their membership in the community of scholars, thus excluding their legitimacy in the academic community. Aguirre (2000) and Gregory (2001) suggested that the barriers faced by minority and Black female faculty members have a significant impact on their attaining tenure.

Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) conducted a 1-year qualitative self-study that examined the experiences of two female and two male faculty members of color in the Department of Education at Pinnacle University (PU). Using the five tenets of CRT: (a) counter-storytelling, (b) the permanence of racism, (c) Whiteness as property, (d) interest conversions, and (e) the critique of liberalism, the aim of the research study was to highlight diversity issues, barriers, and obstacles faced by tenure-track faculty members.
of color during the tenure process. Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) employed counter-storytelling to share the narratives of “people who[se] experiences are often not told” (p. 95). Using the first-person experiences of faculty of color for three 60-90-minute focus groups, Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) used a self-reflective process of transition and action research on exploring PU’s diversity efforts and activities in teaching, research, and service. Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) noted counter-storytelling was used as a chosen research method in order to inspire other faculty members of color to share their stories and counter stories, in an effort to promote diversity and increase recruitment and retention among faculty of color.

In the Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) study, focus group transcripts and code-theme generation were used to code, line-by-line, data using a comparative analysis process. A verification process of confirming and disconfirming themes that emerged from the original coding resulted in the following themes: (a) frustrations, (b) confronting diversity, and (c) coping strategies. Based on the research findings, Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) noted that PU had made significant increases in the number of faculty of color during the transition process of creating a more diverse work environment. The findings also indicate that the participants in the research were involved 40% of the time in teaching, 40% of the time was engaged in research, and 20% of the time, the participants were engaged in service to their institutions; yet, they felt frustrated with, within, and against the institution’s dominant cultural setting. Consequently, the Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) participants asserted that while diversity efforts at PU were beneficial, needed, and rewarding, the participants often felt frustrated. The lived experiences of the participants affirmed the emotional connections and feelings related to the tenure process
being significantly different from the experiences of White faculty members (Garrison-Wade et al., 2012).

Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) concluded that all participants in the study expressed support in the hiring of diverse faculty, professional development on diversity, and interest in “moving beyond the ‘talk’ of diversity to envisioning the transformation of the environment that would support faculty members of color” (p. 101). As a result of the Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) study’s findings, the participants created a faculty of color support group for doctoral students of color; a safe zone in their offices for gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students; and syllabi that addressed issues of diversity and social justice. Coping strategies, such as frustrations related to the tenure process, denial of feelings, mental filtration of information, separation of feelings and emotions, and mentally processing situations of discourse without reacting with personal feelings or emotions had been employed by the research participants (Garrison-Wade, et al. 2012). One limitation was noted in the Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) study because it yielded no significant gender differences in the experiences of male faculty members and female faculty members.

Scholarly research has concluded that Black faculty members describe obstacles and barriers encountered during the tenure process, such as racism, ethnic and gender biases, time spent in advisement, institutional obligations, low evaluation scores, and less mentoring compared to White faculty members (Dancy & Jean-Marie, 2014; Edwards et al., 2011; Frazier, 2011; Garrison-Wade et al., 2012; Turner-Kelly & McCann, 2014). Black female faculty members expressed significant feelings of isolation and frustration as they balanced the time spent teaching, advising, and serving on committees, which
could hinder retention and progression toward tenure (Dancy & Jean-Marie, 2014; Edwards et al., 2011; Garrison-Wade et al., 2012; Frazier, 2011; Turner-Kelly & McCann, 2014). As a result, in most cases, the experiences of minority and Black female faculty members are different than the experiences of Black male faculty members, White male faculty members, and White female faculty members. Mentoring, as noted in research literature, could help overcome barriers, increase retention and recruitment efforts, and aid in the professional development of Black female faculty members in the professoriate (Allen et al., 2000a, 2000b; Aguirre, 2000; Diggs et al., 2009; Edwards & Ross, 2018; Frazier, 2011; Gregory, 2001; Hinton, 2009; Tillman, 2001, 2018).

Racial and Institutional Climate

Absent from the literature are the ways in which Black faculty members respond to hostile climates on college campuses. Organizational theorists have noted institutional departure as the primary factor with one’s dissatisfaction in their work environment. Suggestions offered to combat challenging environments include concepts from March and Simon’s (1958) seminal study on organization theory of acceptance (staying), rejection (leaving), voicing dissatisfaction, and changing the environment (Augier & March, 2004) and Hirschman’s (1974) exit-voice framework proposing employee dissatisfaction results in exit (e.g., leaving unfavorable environments) or voice. Those who remain in unfavorable environments choose to voice dissatisfaction to those in power (Burris et al., 2008). It should be noted that of the suggestions offered in the research conducted by Augier & March (2004) and Burris et al. (2008), none were easily afforded to Black faculty members who were faced with enduring hostile environments (Griffin et al., 2011a).
The discrimination Black faculty members face is categorized as structural racism and personal racism (Griffin et al., 2011a; Johnsrud & DesJarlais, 1994; Johnsrud & Sadeo, 1998). Structural racism, also known as “institutional racism,” refers to a system of institutional structures that leads to observable disparities between Black and White faculty members (Griffin et al., 2011a). Literature suggests that structural racism can be attributed to the underrepresentation of Black faculty members in the professoriate (Griffin et al., 2011a; Jayakumar et al., 2009; Turner et al., 1999). Structural racism is also evident in the scholarship and research activities of Black faculty members. Research activities in the area of social justice relating to racial and ethnic communities are scrutinized and devalued by White peers (Aguirre, 2000; Stanley, 2006; Turner & Meyers, 2000). Personal racism includes experiences of subtle forms of racism referred to as “microaggressions.” Microaggressions include unconscious, subtle forms of overt and covert discrimination in the form of verbal and nonverbal insults toward Blacks and other people of color based on race and stereotypes, which cause stress to the people of color while benefiting White people (Arnold et al., 2016; Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2006, 2007; Stevenson, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009). Racial battle fatigue is a theoretical framework that highlights the result of psychological and physiological responses to strain on Blacks, and other people of color, as a result of ongoing and pervasive forms of racism and racial microaggressions (Smith, 2004).

Griffin et al. (2011a) conducted an interpretive multi-case study of 28 Black professors employed at two public research institutions; one was located in the Western section of the United States (Oceanside University) and the other was located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States (Column University) with similar student enrollment.
and faculty size. The faculty members at Oceanside University were 66% White and 2% Black. The faculty members at Column University were 70% White and 5% Black. Oceanside University’s student population comprised 37% White students compared to 4% Black students and 13% Latino/Latina students. Column University students were 55% White, 11% Black, and 5% Latino/Latina. The aim of the Griffin et al. (2011a) research was to examine how (a) Black professors describe their perceptions of and experiences with race and racism on their college campuses, (b) how Black professors respond to more challenging climates, and (c) from where and from whom do Black professors receive support to persist in spite of their experiences in hostile environments. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding regarding how day-to-day racism and stereotyping impacted the ways Black faculty members navigated environments that were perceived as hostile and “chilly.” More specifically, Griffin et al. (2011) intended to examine behaviors exhibited by Black professors in response to these interactions to contribute to scholarly research on understanding coping strategies that impact retention rates, outcomes, and job satisfaction. In the Griffin et al. (2011a) study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 Oceanside University professors; this included 10 males and seven females. The 11 participants at Column University comprised six males and five females. In total, 26 full-time professors and 25 tenure-line professors were interviewed. Structured one-on-one interviews provided the researchers with a description of the participants’ path into the academy, experiences on campus, perceptions of professional expectations, obligations, and relationships with students (Griffin et al., 2011a). Demographic data using SPSS software and the transcription of the narratives were organized through a systematic coding process.
The findings of the Griffin et al. (2011a) study concluded that participants described instances of personal racism in the form of microaggressions, in addition to the ways institutional racism posed as a barrier to their success in the academy. A small number of participants indicated that experiences with racism were a motivating factor in seeking academic positions elsewhere outside of the college. The narratives of the participants also indicated that their institutional departure was uncommon and resulted in the participants seeking ways to define themselves outside of their academic departments, and in most cases, outside of their institutions (Griffin et al. 2011a). Similarly, Turner et al. (1999) noted in their study that while participants noted barriers as a result of institutional and personal racism, 95% indicated that they intended to remain in academia. The ways Black faculty members navigated the chilly and hostile climate resulted in behavioral constraints and modifications. The Griffin et al. (2011a) research findings noted instances where participants’ reactions to certain situations were avoided in order to dispel inaccurate perceptions based on racial stereotypes and identities. The participants’ responses to racial and institutional racism included engaging in-service activities, devoting more time to students, and engaging in mentoring relationships as a way of “promoting success in the academy, and developing another generation of black scholars” (Griffin et al., 2011a, p. 515).

Jayakumar et al. (2009) conducted a study utilizing data from the 2001 Cooperative Institution Research Program national survey of teaching faculty to examine the perceptions, experiences, environment, and faculty intentions to leave the academy based on campus climate. Faculty surveys were administered to 416 colleges and universities (338 four-year and 78 two-year colleges and universities) with a 41% return
rate. Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were excluded from the sample because of the significant qualitative differences in the experiences of faculty of color at HBCUs compared to PWI’s. The sample size included 37,582 faculty members at 358 institutions. Faculty of color comprised 4,131 African Americans, Asian/Asian Americans, and Latino faculty members. A separate analysis was conducted for American Indian/Alaskan Native faculty based on the small sample size. White faculty was included in the study as a separate racial subgroup. White faculty was made up of 33,451 faculty members.

Jayakumar et al. (2009) examined two dependent variables. The first dependent variable was based on two questions that asked participants if (a) they considered leaving the academy during the last 2 years and (b) given the chance to begin their career again, would they still want to be a college professor. The second dependent variable in the study was job satisfaction, including satisfaction with salary, fringe benefits, opportunities for scholarly activities, and teaching load. Independent variables included participants’ backgrounds, institutional characteristics, environment, faculty beliefs, values, and attitudes. A key variable in the study was the designation of an institutional index of racial climate. Jayakumar et al. (2009) utilized the Hurtado et al. (1998) theoretical concept of racial climate based on the following criteria: (a) historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, (b) structural diversity, (c) psychological climate perceptions, and (d) behavioral climate to determine an institutional index of racial climate. Jayakumar et al. (2009) suggested influences of racial climate in consonance with the Hurtado et al. (1998) study of four criteria of racial climate based on faculty experiences using a racial climate composite variable consisting of four items: (a) individual psychological,
(b) individual behavioral, (c) structural representation, and (d) structured legacy of inclusion or exclusion.

Cross tabulations of the data revealed 44% of faculty of color perceived a hostile racial climate, and they indicated a desire to leave the academy compared to 30% of faculty of color who perceived a mild or moderate racial climate and indicated a desire to leave the academy. For faculty who perceived a benign racial climate, 27% of those faculty members indicated a desire to leave the academy. Jayakumar et al. (2009) concluded that the stress and anxiety related to the review and promotion process made it more difficult to remain in the academy. Faculty of color with higher academic ranks are more likely to be retained mainly due to the building up of resistance to hostile racial climates.

A strong correlation between racial climate and satisfaction were noted for Black and Latino/Latina faculty members. Results suggest that a negative effect of racial climate is more pronounced in Black and Latino/Latina faculty members. Findings reveal retention of White faculty members increased, as the racial climate was perceived as negative. Jayakumar et al. (2009) asserted that negative racial climates benefit White faculty members when determining retention outcomes. One significant limitation noted in the Jayakumar et al. (2009) study was the exclusion of faculty who left or who were no longer in the academy.

Jayakumar et al. (2009) and Griffin et al. (2011a) used CRT as a theoretical framework to examine the role race plays in providing historical context, validity, and reliability based on the experiential knowledge of Black faculty members as a result of their encounters with White privilege. Both studies (Griffin et al., 2011a; Jayakumar et
al., 2009) underscore the complexity of satisfaction and retention of faculty members of
color compared to White faculty members in response to hostile environments. A
growing body of literature has articulated the experiences of Black female faculty
members with structural and personal racism, marginalization, isolation, racial
discrimination, and feelings of “otherness” faced in higher education (Allen et al., 2000a,
2000b; Collins, 1986; Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Stanley, 2006; Stevenson, 2012; Turner,
2003; Turner et al., 1999).

**Origin and Definitions of Mentoring**

Greek mythology provides the first account of the functions of a mentor. In
Homer’s poem, “The Odysseus,” Odysseus, the king of Ithaca leaves his son,
Telemachus, in the care of Mentor, who, for 10 years, guides and educates Telemachus
(Campbell et al., 2012). Research on mentoring reveals an absence of an operational
definition. According to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary “mentor” is defined
as “a trusted counselor or guide” (Mentor, 2009). Authors Galbraith and Zelenak (1991)
defined mentoring as “a powerful emotional and passionate interaction whereby the
mentor and protégé experience personal, professional, and intellectual growth and
development” (p. 126). For the purpose of the Galbraith and Zelenak (1991) study, the
researcher used Blackwell’s (1989) definition of mentoring as “a process by which
persons of superior rank, special achievements and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and
facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés”
(p. 9).
Literature on Mentoring in Higher Education

Kram (1983) conducted a seminal in-depth qualitative study that examined 18 developmental relationships among pairs of younger and older managers that spent a significant amount of time with each other. Based on the increase in the number of relationships identified in the sample, Kram (1983) described four phases of the mentor relationship: (a) initiation, (b) cultivation, (c) separation, and (d) redefinition, all of which have been widely used in research studies that examine mentoring relationships (Kram, 1983; Kram & Higgins, 2008; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Tillman (2001) conducted a study that underscores the limited research literature that addresses mentoring for African American faculty. The researcher hypothesized that “although women and minorities may have similar problems finding mentors and establishing successful mentoring relationships, the extreme underrepresentation of African Americans in academics makes mentoring even more problematic for this group” (p. 300). Tillman’s (2001) study was conducted at two predominately White research institutions in the Midwest region of the United States, referred to as University A and University B. The participants from University A included four African American untenured assistant professors and one African American tenured associate professor. The participants from University B included five African American untenured assistant professors. Five mentors from University A and five mentors from University B agreed to participate in the study. One participant each from University A and University B noted having an African American full professor as a secondary mentor. Unstructured in-depth interviews focused on the five dimensions of mentoring that are frequently discussed in literature (a) mentor-protégé pairs, (b) phases of the mentor-protégé relationship, (c) mentor functions, (d)
benefits to the protégé, and (e) race and gender in mentoring relationships (Tillman, 2001). Tillman’s (2001) study posited mentoring as a method to promote the growth and development of African American faculty members and to increase their representation in predominantly White institutions. The Tillman (2001) findings suggest that mentors in mentor-protégé pairs are, in most cases, older than the protégés, from the same academic department, and share the same interests. Tillman’s (2001) study highlighted that some of the protégés had different research, personal, and cultural interests. Tillman (2001) contended that while most of the mentors and protégés did not describe mentoring relationships in phases as noted in Kram’s (1983) seminal study, they agreed that the mentoring relationship developed over time. All mentor participants reported performing both career and psychosocial functions in the mentoring relationship—all beneficial for the protégé. Examples of career and psychosocial functions included contributing to the socialization, the professional growth, and the development of the protégés, in addition to collaborating with scholarly research and publications and advising them on the tenure and promotion process. One distinction noted in career and psychosocial functions performed by the mentors were predicated on the race of the mentor. The study’s findings disclosed that White mentors primarily performed career functions, while African American protégés relied on African American mentors for psychosocial and emotional support.

Thomas (1990) conducted an intra-organizational seminal study that examined the influence of race on protégés’ experiences of formal development relationships. Data collected from the surveys of 88 Black and 107 White managers provided similar results in that the participants indicated that same-race mentoring relationships provided more
psychosocial support than cross-race mentoring relationships (Thomas, 1990). Benefits to
the protégé can include professional and personal benefits, such as professional
networking opportunities, research collaboration, increased publication rates, advice on
how to balance research, teaching and service, and support for tenure and promotion
(Thomas, 1990). All of the protégé participants in Thomas’s (1990) study agreed that
race, at times, could be one factor that affects the relationship on a personal and cultural
level; however, few concerns were expressed about race being a factor in their
professional relationship. The findings of Thomas’s (1990) study validate Tillman’s
(2001) conclusion that “female faculty members may experience difficulty finding female
mentors because of the small number of women in academia generally and within the
same department more specifically” (p. 314).

Blackwell (1987), in his seminal study a detailed, included a detailed analysis of
427 education institutions and their 743 professional programs to examine predictors for
Black student enrollment, retention, and graduation. Results of Blackwell’s (1987) study
identify the presence of Black faculty as the strongest predictor for success. Blackwell
(1987) asserted that institutions that are committed to enhancing student diversity should
hire more minority faculty. Blackwell (1989) defines mentoring as “a process by which
persons of superior rank, special achievements and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and
facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés” (p.
9). Comparably, Blackwell (1989) noted that mentoring would increase the retention of
minority students in colleges and universities, which would increase graduation rates of
students of color who would then enter, complete graduate school, and be hired as faculty
and retained as a member of the professoriate. Blackwell (1989) further asserted:
Mentoring is a process that can increase the retention of minority students in colleges and universities, a process through which larger numbers may be graduated from colleges, and enter and complete graduate training, be hired for faculty positions, and be retained as contributing members of the professoriate.

(p. 1)

Relational Mentoring

Allen and Eby (2004) examined mentoring relationships and mentor functions of 249 participants who reported experience as a mentor. The sample consisted of 162 men, 85 women, and two individuals who did not self-report their gender. The average number of years for the all-male mentors’ mentorships were 3.24 years, and the average number of years for the all-female mentors’ mentorships were 3.01 years. Using quantitative research design methods, Allen and Eby’s (2004) study examined a range of factors linked to mentorship functions of mentors based on previous research (Kram, 1983; Ragins & Kram, 2007). The study hypothesized that: (a) female mentors reporting psychosocial mentoring will be more than that of male mentors, (b) male mentors will report providing more career mentoring than female mentors, and (c) mentors involved in same-gender mentoring relations will report more psychosocial mentoring than that mentors involved in cross-gender mentoring. Experience as a mentor, mentorship characteristics, and mentoring functions were measures employed in the study. Results indicate that female mentors provided more psychosocial mentoring than that of male mentors, and male mentors provided more career mentoring than female mentors. No conclusive data supported the hypothesis that mentors involved in same-gender
mentoring relationships would report more psychosocial mentoring than would mentors in cross-gender mentoring relationships (Allen & Eby, 2004)

Allen and Eby (2004) further noted female mentors reported providing more psychosocial mentoring to female protégés, with no significant differences in male mentors reporting providing psychosocial mentoring to both male and female protégés. Assumptions as to why female-mentor/female-protégé revealed a higher degree of psychosocial mentoring could possibly be attributed to barriers in the workplace, such as gender discrimination. Allen and Eby (2004) concluded female mentors might be more empathic therefore providing a greater degree of counseling and friendship, both elements found within the framework of relational mentoring.

Ragins (2016) suggested relational mentoring is a theory that examines the phenomenon of the “how and why” mentoring relationships become high-quality mentoring relationships in the workplace. Relational mentoring attempts to go beyond the viewpoints of traditional mentoring to reflect a myriad of diverse perspectives found in high-quality mentoring. Ragins (2016) proposed two key aspects of relational mentoring: (a) relational outcomes and (b) relational behaviors. Relational outcomes contribute to the personal and professional growth, development, and learning for both mentors and protégés. Factors, such as work-life balance, life satisfaction, purpose, and connection are improved as a result of relational mentoring (Ragins, 2016). Current research suggests high-quality mentoring focuses on the relational aspects of trust, disclosure, vulnerability, and commitment (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Ragins, 1997, 2016; Ragins & Kram, 2007). Relational behaviors that extend beyond psychosocial and career development functions, often found in traditional mentoring relationships, capture the full essence of behaviors
and processes evident in high-quality mentoring (Ragins, 1997, 2016; Ragins & Kram, 2007). Behaviors and processes found in high-quality relationships reflect those of mutuality, learning, growth, inspiration, affirmation, and authenticity (Ragins, 2016).
Advantages of Mentoring Relationships, Programs, and Support Networks

Mentoring could be beneficial for Black women faculty members. Research indicates informal and formal mentoring, through the development of mentoring relationships, has a significant impact on a Black women faculty member’s professional development, which could assist in overcoming barriers and achieving tenure as they balance the demands and rigor of the academic workplace (Antonio, 2002; Baxley, 2012; Dade et al., 2015; Davis et al., 2011c; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Frazier, 2011; Gregory, 2001; Stanley, 2006; Tillman, 2001, 2018). With the development of successful mentoring programs, the number of Black women faculty members in colleges and universities will increase, in addition to the number of tenured Black faculty members (Allen & Joseph, 2018; Irby, 2014; Kelly & McCann, 2014; Tillman, 2018).

Washburn (2007) outlined a campus-wide faculty mentoring network (FMN) program that employed a strategic collaboration model that was developed at an R1 institution (Purdue University) in 1997, and it aimed at achieving four goals:

1. to help interested faculty become better teachers by fostering educational creativity, innovation, and effectiveness both in and out of the classroom;
2. to help faculty cope with the demands of research and service;
3. to help facilitate faculty’s work toward promotion and tenure;
4. to serve as an advocate for faculty members. (p. 65)

Strategic collaboration is a mentoring model that uses a peer-group approach designed to assist faculty with moving through the faculty ranks to full professor (Washburn, 2007). The strategic collaboration model consists of the matching of faculty members with the rank of assistant professor or associate professor with senior faculty.
members with institutional knowledge who are willing to assist in the professional and career advancement of junior faculty members (Washburn, 2007). With support from the institution’s administrative leadership, quoting Tuchman (1965), Washburn (2007) described five stages the peer groups typically move through:

(1) forming, in which they become acquainted with one another; (2) storming, in which some disagreements about roles and procedures, as well as personality differences, surface; (3) norming, in which some sense of ownership and belonging occur; (4) performing, in which the real work of the team is accomplished; and (5) adjourning, in which the work of the team has been accomplished and the members move on. (p. 64)

Washburn (2007) conducted a single case study in 2002 of Purdue University’s FMN program aimed at exploring the lived experiences of mentors and protégés in the FMN program to understand the behavioral and emotional responses of the participants, to examine the protégés’ perceptions of the strategic collaboration model in career advancement, and to suggest changes by the mentors and protégés based on their lived experiences (Washburn, 2007). Washburn (2007) reported findings from senior faculty (two full professors, one male and one female) who served as mentors for the strategic collaboration pilot during the years 2004-2005. Each mentor had more than 30 years of service at the college and was inducted into the college’s teaching academy. The study consisted of face-to-face meetings with mentors to discuss the elements of a strategic collaboration model, to clarify expectations and roles, and to have a follow-up meeting at the end of the academic year. The participants in the study identified as protégés were four assistant professors. The six participants in the study met five times during the
semester, and at the end of the semester, they completed a survey consisting of open-ended questions rating the relationship that developed with the mentoring group. Participants were also asked to describe their experiences as a member of a strategic collaboration mentoring team. The results of the Washburn (2007) study indicated that the mentors believed the mentoring experiences were of value and contributed to teacher effectiveness, and the experiences supported ingenuity in teaching interdisciplinary courses. The protégés noted beneficial and positive aspects of the mentoring program for providing direction, for providing access, and for the formation of professional relationships. Washburn (2007) affirmed that strategic collaboration fulfills both career and psychosocial functions based on Kram’s (1985) research, asserting that elements of trust, role modeling, acceptance, validation, counseling, and friendship are formed through formal and informal mentoring programs.

**Chapter Summary**

Research suggests the number of Black faculty members across the nation has remained stagnant over the years (USDOE, 2019). The number of full-time Black faculty members, across genders, represents less than 5% of the nation’s collegiate professoriate (USDOE, 2019). Diversifying faculty, more specifically Black faculty members, has been a challenge. While the number of students of color has increased steadily, the recruitment and retention of Black women faculty members has been unfruitful in predominantly White institutions (Allen et al., 2000a, 2000b; Ryu, 2010; Turner, 2003; Turner et al., 1999). Tillman (2001) concluded that research conducted over the last 15 years indicate that “African American faculty are severely underrepresented in higher education and particularly in predominantly White institutions” (p. 295).
The underrepresentation of Black women in higher education signifies the need to investigate the “leaky pipeline” phenomenon that underscores the barriers that Black women faculty members experience, thus preventing them from successfully achieving tenure in the academy. Barriers, such as racism, social isolation, lack of access, lack of success, lack of time to service and teach, excessive committee involvement, discredited research, and lack of mentoring, can hinder the tenure process for Black women and minority faculty members (Aguirre, 2000; Alfred, 2001; Allen et al., 2000a, 2018; Diggs et al., 2009; Edwards & Ross, 2018; Frazier, 2011; Gregory, 1999, 2001; Tillman, 2001). There is a need to investigate and gain a better understanding of perceptions of mentoring relationships of Black women community college professors. Scholarly evidence has consistently documented mentoring as instrumental in the successful attainment of tenure for Black women faculty members (Antonio, 2002; Blackwell, 1989; Dade et al., 2015; Davis et al., 2011b; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Gregory, 2001; Palmer & Jones, 2019; Tillman, 2001, 2018). The concept of examining relational mentoring relationships is integral to the success of Black women faculty members because it can reveal the potential benefits of relational mentoring with overall job satisfaction, success, and professional development. Research also indicates that institutional barriers within higher education play a significant role in a Black women faculty member’s tenure and promotion. Similarly, the implementation of programs, policies, and practices that support recruitment, retention, tenure, promotion, and mentoring will help to support Black women faculty members (Frazier, 2011; Thompson, 2008; Tillman, 2018).
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Recruitment and retention are important aspects for colleges and universities as they attempt to diversify faculty. In fact, it is critical that degree-granting postsecondary institutions explore ways to diversify the faculty to reflect diverse student populations. However, the evidence has indicated that diversifying faculty has been a challenge (Allen et al., 2000a; Tillman, 2001; Turner, 2003; Turner et al., 1999). The underrepresentation of Black faculty continues to be pervasive and entrenched in American colleges and universities (Allen et al., 2000a, 2000b; Perna et al., 2007; Turner et al., 1999, 2008, 2011; Umbach, 2006; Zambrana et al., 2015). As noted in Turner’s (2003) study “although some progress has been made in diversifying the faculty despite years of affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation, the recruitment and retention of faculty of color remains one of the most difficult challenges facing American higher education” (p. 113).

In examining mentoring relationships, it has been noted that mentoring has been identified as a critical element in the career and psychosocial development of women faculty members, including Black women faculty members (Dingus, 2008; Grant & Ghee, 2015; Holmes et al., 2007; Kosoko-Lasaki et al., 2006; Meschitti & Smith, 2017; Woolnough & Fielden, 2013). The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. The research design
methodology for this study summarizes the overall research study design, the research context, the research participants, the procedures used in data collection, and the procedures used to analyze the data. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring?
2. What relational aspects of mentoring are significant in achieving tenure?
3. How are outcome measures associated with tenure influenced by mentoring relationships?
4. How do mentoring relationships help navigate barriers (potential and/or actual), if any, in academia?

Qualitative research is an inquiry process that relies on interpretation and meaning to explore social and human problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sale & Thielke, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) described the characteristics of qualitative research: (a) it is conducted in a natural setting; (b) the researcher is the key instrument for collecting data through the examination of documents, observing behavior, and interviewing; (c) multiple data sources are collected and used and organized into themes and categories; (d) complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic includes synthesizing themes and categories that can be validated by the data; (e) participants’ multiple perspectives are reflected as the research focuses on the participants’ meaning of the problem and not the researchers’ assumptions based on the literature; (f) context-dependent views provide the contextual features of the setting and its influence on the participants’ experiences; (g) emergent design allows for the research process to be
changed, altered, or shifted throughout the process of conducting the study, and (h) reflexivity describes the positionality of the researchers in the study.

Phenomenology, a specific type of design of inquiry, with its origins rooted in social science and the psychology disciplines, is based on the 20th century writings of German mathematician, Edmund Husserl, during a period of time that sought to explore the relationships between human and social phenomena. As the phenomenological movement evolved, its focus shifted from descriptive inquiry to interpretive inquiry. Interpretative phenomenology developed by Heidegger, a student of Husserl, focuses on the detailed interpretation of meanings of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is based on three theoretical foundations: (a) phenomenology (lived human experiences), (b) hermeneutics (theory of interpretation), and (c) ideography (particular experiences of individuals) (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The role of hermeneutic inquiry is to identify and understand participants’ meaning of a phenomenon with an emphasis on the role of the researcher to understand social, political, and cultural contexts based on information yielded by the participants and by relevant data (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). IPA seeks to examine and gain a deeper understanding of a personal lived experience (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). An interpretative phenomenological design was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to examine the relationships between human phenomena and the experiences of Black women community college professors experiencing a social phenomenon in an attempt to ground the epistemological viewpoint of investigating the consciousness of how they descriptively view the world (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015; Wright, 2015).
Within the context of qualitative research designs, the researcher’s role in this study was to examine the phenomenon through the voices of the research participants based on inquiry and exploration (Leko, 2014). Smith et al. (2009) posited that interpretative phenomenological analysis is a systematic approach to examine “how a particular phenomenon has been understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context” (p. 51). In qualitative research, Moustakas (1994a) offered insight into the procedures of the phenomenological method that describes the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. The achievement of tenure represents success in the academy through which mentoring has been found to be a contributing factor (Diggs et al., 2009; Tillman, 2001, 2018; Zambrana et al., 2015). Research studies designed to examine mentoring relationships, experiences, access, quality, and opportunities for women of color are limited (Evans & Cokley, 2008; Li et al., 2018; Stanley, 2006; Wilson-Ahlstrom et al., 2017). Additionally, there is a gap in the scholarly research on the lived experiences and perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure of Black women community college professors.

Research Context

This study was conducted at three community colleges in a large, urban public university system in New York State. City University of New York (CUNY) was established in 1847 as the Free Academy of the City of New York, created to provide access to public education for the poor and children of immigrants. In 1961, the New
York State Legislature designated CUNY to serve as “an independent system of higher education” (CUNY, 2017). CUNY is made up of 11 senior colleges, seven community colleges, and seven honors and professional schools across the five boroughs of New York City. In 2017, CUNY’s student enrollment was over 245,000, and it includes non-traditional and traditional college students (CUNY, 2017). In the fall of 2018, CUNY’s diverse community college undergraduate student population was: 16.9% Asian, 28.2% Black, 39.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 15.0% White (CUNY, 2019b). In 2017, full-time community college professorial faculty at CUNY were: 13.2% Asian, 13.9% Black, 11.6% Hispanic/Latino, and 52.1% White.

In 1940, the New York State Legislature established tenure at CUNY. Tenure, a 7-year probationary period for faculty members, provides job security, academic freedom protections, and a termination without just cause provision (CUNY, 2019a). The Board of Higher Education of the City of New York (1975) established the criteria for tenure: (a) teaching effectiveness; (b) scholarship and professional growth, in addition to two supplemental considerations that factor into the decision to grant tenure; (c) service to the institution; and (d) service to the public. Mentoring has been identified as an important and influential factor in a junior faculty member’s professional development, and mentoring can result in retention and overall job satisfaction (Antonio, 2002; Blackwell, 1989; Dade et al., 2015; Davis et al., 2011b; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Fleming et al., 2015; Gregory, 2001; Tillman, 2001, 2018; White et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2010).

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. This research study explored the lived
experiences of seven tenured Black women community college professors within three community colleges within CUNY. All seven of the selected participants represent the faculty population of full-time Black women faculty members within each of the selected community colleges. The research study was conducted in three CUNY community colleges that represent a diverse student and faculty population.

**Research Participants**

For this study, purposeful and chain referral sampling was used to access a small sample of participants who met the inclusion criteria and who could provide rich descriptive information on the essence of mentoring and achieving tenure. Chain referral, a form of purposeful sampling, was used to recruit prospective participants from multiple social and/or professional networks of designated gatekeepers who helped to facilitate access between the setting, the potential participants, and the researcher (Penrod et al., 2003). Penrod et al. (2003) explicitly noted that the “gatekeeper helps facilitate processes for agency approval of the project and is then responsible for recruiting potential respondents and disseminating information about the project to them” (p. 104). All participants were identified by gatekeepers who provided the researcher with entry and access to the targeted population through their multiple social and/or professional networks. The researcher developed a clear and concise protocol (Appendix A) for the gatekeepers’ involvement in the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) underscored purposeful sampling as a primary feature in qualitative research that suggests the intentional selection of participants and the sites that will help to inform the researcher of the research problem and phenomenon to be examined. Smith and Shinebourne (2012) asserted that the purposeful selection of a small homogenous sample of participants
allows researchers to facilitate the extraction of rich, detailed information needed to understand the phenomenon and answer the research questions. Purposive and chain-referral sampling allowed the researcher to access a small homogeneous sample size of five to seven participants to acquire descriptive, lived experiences of Black women community college professors on perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. The participants in the study met the criteria: (a) individuals over the age of 18, (b) self-identified as a Black woman with tenure status, (c) employed at a 2-year institution within CUNY at the time of the study, and (c) previously exposed to mentoring before their own tenure. The participants are identified as Participants 1-7, to maintain the participants’ confidentiality and privacy.

After initial contact with the participants was established, through self-referrals obtained from the gatekeeper, the researcher forwarded a letter of invitation to all participants (Appendix B), via email, outlining the description and purpose of the research study, methods of collecting data, interview timeline, written informed consent, and voluntary participation. The participants were provided with an opportunity to review the informed written consent form (Appendix C). Interested participants were directed to reply to the researcher via email to confirm their willingness to participate in this study and to arrange a date and time for the face-to-face interview. Signed, informed written consent forms were provided to the researcher prior to the face-to-face interviews. Within 2 weeks from the initial email invitation, the researcher was able to arrange interviews with the participants. The interview process concluded in approximately 3 weeks. Ethical principles for research were employed, including adhering to consent guidelines, and
following procedural guidelines for the dissemination of information regarding this study’s purpose, nature, and requirements (Moustakas, 1994b).

**Instruments Used in Data Collection**

In phenomenological research, the researcher is responsible for developing a systematic framework that directs the research study. Moustakas (1994b) asserted that research questions should demonstrate an impassioned interest in a problem or topic with social or personal significance. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested qualitative researchers differentiate philosophical assumptions offered in phenomenological research to ensure the purposive selection of participants who have experienced the phenomenon.

Data collected through face-to-face, semi-structured phenomenological interviews were aligned to the research topic, research questions, and interview questions (Moustakas, 1994b). Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Appendix D) helped the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of relational mentoring based on the lived experiences of the participants. In relation to the study’s research questions, this format allowed for a structured exchange of descriptive information provided by the participants and interpreted by the researcher on the meaning of the phenomenon (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The researcher used a peer-debriefer, who was not affiliated with the study, and peer-debriefing techniques to establish the validity of the interview questions and overall research study.

In this study, the researcher used the Berk et al. (2005) Mentorship Profile Questionnaire (MPQ) (Appendix E) and Mentorship Effectiveness Scale (MES) (Appendix F) as a guide to facilitate open-ended questions on a specific mentoring relationship. Permission was granted to the researcher by Dr. Ronald Berk to use both the
MPQ and the MES. The MPQ describes the mentoring relationship and outcome measures of the mentoring relationship from the perspective of the mentee. The MES is a 12-item Likert-type rating scale that evaluates 12 behavioral characteristics of the mentor (Berk et al., 2005). Berk et al. (2005) suggested that measurements of item analysis, validity, and reliability of scales based on a mentors’ effectiveness lacks the ability to be calculated. Limitations in computing aggregate ratings to describe mentoring relationships in a statistical sample minimizes the validity coefficient and standard measurements of internal consistency reliability (Berk et al., 2005). All the participants received the MPQ and the MES prior to the start of the interviews. The researcher used the MES to draw a connection between the participants’ responses and the relational behaviors and processes found in relational mentoring (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

Questionnaires provide researchers with objective quantitative data that can be used for a subjective descriptive qualitative analysis of the data (Leko, 2014). The MPQ was used to identify mentoring episode outcomes and mentoring relationship outcomes based on the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of mentoring. Interview question responses were used to provide narrative data on relational conditions, relational skills, and contextual factors identified in the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of relational mentoring.

**Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis**

Smith (2018) contended that in IPA, “the primary role of the researcher is (a) to invite the participant to share this sense-making; (b) to act as a witness to its articulation; (c) and then, in turn, to make sense of it” (p. 1956). In interpreting and analyzing data, researchers should consider influences of personal preconceptions and assumptions within the study. Bracketing, reflexivity, and epoché are common terms used in
phenomenological research to establish an awareness of researcher biases and preconceptions about a phenomenon (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The researcher addressed reflexivity by examining the connections between the researcher and the participants by acknowledging past experiences and other demographics that could potentially influence data collection and analysis processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hamill & Sinclair, 2013).

All participants were reminded that participation in this study was voluntary and could be terminated immediately at the participant’s request. Interviews were held in a quiet, semi-private setting selected by the participants. Interview questions were developed to provide a coherent connection between the study’s interview questions, research questions, and conceptual framework. An interview protocol (Appendix G) was utilized for the recording and inquiry of questions during the interview process and to ensure participant confidentiality. The interview protocol helped to guide the researcher in ensuring all interview questions and salient topics were addressed. The researcher utilized the interview protocol, the study’s research questions, and the interview questions to construct thematic knowledge and conversational fluidity.

The interviews were audio-recorded using a password-protected audio device, and they were transcribed by REV.com, a transcription service provider. All digital audio recordings, transcriptions of interviews, and the data analysis codebook are stored in a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer, which is stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files were assigned identity codes and pseudonyms. The electronic files do not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect the participants to this study.
Other materials, including field notes or paper files, relating to the data collection and analysis, are stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a fire- and theft-proof safe in the private home and office of the principal researcher. Only the researcher has access to electronic and/or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data and signed informed consent forms will be kept by the researcher for a period of 3 years following publication of this work, according to the procedures established by St. John Fisher College. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring the data is not possible.

Data analysis in qualitative research directs researchers to construct and organize data that is obtained during data collection for analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Wojnar and Swanson (2007) outlined a seven-step process in analyzing narratives to include the following:

(a) reading the interviews to obtain an overall understanding; (b) writing interpretive summaries and coding for emerging themes; (c) analyzing selected transcripts as a group to identify themes; (d) returning to the text or to the participants to clarify disagreements in interpretation and writing a composite analysis for each text; (e) comparing and contrasting texts to identify and describe shared practices and common meanings; (f) identifying patterns that link the themes; and (g) eliciting responses and suggestions on a final draft from the interpretive team and from others who are familiar with the content or the methods of study. (p. 177)
Coding Process

Coding is a cyclical process that involves the assignment of a word or phrase that best reflects the essence of language-based or visual meanings (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher developed an electronic codebook to organize the data based on meanings, codes, definitions, and the participants’ responses based on the interview questions. Three cycles of coding were used to analyze the data. During the first-cycle coding process, the researcher used a combination of a priori, in vivo, emotion, and descriptive coding techniques derived from a review of the transcribed interview data. Second-cycle coding involved the reorganization and recategorization of data codes obtained from the first-cycle coding using a pattern coding technique. The code weaving of themes, patterns, and categories that emerged from the analysis of codes supported the research study’s written narrative analysis. Third-cycle coding involved inductive coding to categorize frequently used words, phrases, and patterns to form overarching themes based on participants’ responses.

Using CRT through counter-storytelling provided a voice to the individuals who had been systematically oppressed (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004), and through the framework of relational mentoring (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007), the researcher identified five a priori codes: (a) barriers, (b) contextual factors, (c) mentoring behaviors and processes, (d) mentoring relationship outcomes, and (e) relational conditions.

Triangulation Process

Qualitative validity and reliability are outlined in a research study to ensure accuracy, credibility, and consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study’s validity was established by data triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity. Triangulation of
the data included cross-analyses and inspection of the relevant data, such as the data from interviews, the MES, the MPQ, the researcher’s notes, and an analysis of the emergent themes identified. The researcher employed member checking and a second coder to ensure the accuracy of the research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

**Summary**

Qualitative research allows for the use of interpretative and theoretical frameworks to explore the study of human or social problems through the collection of data, inductive and deductive data analysis, and the creation of themes or patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative research design was selected for this study to analyze and understand a purposive sampling of Black women, community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. An interpretative phenomenological analysis allowed the participants to describe their lived experience with relational mentoring and achieving tenure as the researcher attempted to gain a deeper understanding of how the participants’ interpreted what the phenomenon meant within social, political, and cultural contexts (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015; Smith et al., 2009).
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Research suggests mentoring is instrumental in the successful attainment of tenure for Black women faculty members (Antonio, 2002; Dade et al., 2015; Davis et al., 2011c; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Gregory, 2001; Palmer & Jones, 2019; Tillman, 2012). The examination of relational mentoring relationships is integral to the success of Black women faculty members as it can reveal the potential benefits of relational mentoring in terms of overall job satisfaction, achieving tenure, and professional development. Research also indicates that institutional barriers within higher education play a significant role in a Black woman faculty member’s tenure and promotion. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. This research study focused on the participants’ definition(s) of mentoring, prior to, and after being mentored; aspects of relational mentoring that were significant in their achieving tenure; outcome measures associated with tenure that are influenced by mentoring relationships; and how mentoring relationships help navigate barriers, if any, in academia. This chapter presents the findings based on the data analysis of the seven research participants’ responses to the interview questions.
Research Questions

The study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. How do tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring?
2. What relational aspects of mentoring are significant in achieving tenure?
3. How are outcome measures associated with tenure influenced by mentoring relationships?
4. How do mentoring relationships help navigate barriers (potential and/or actual), if any, in academia?

Interview Questions

Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were developed to address each of the research questions. A peer reviewer employed at a 4-year private institution, who did not participate in the study, reviewed the interview questions for validity. An interview protocol (Appendix G) was used to ensure all interview questions and salient topics were addressed. Table 4.1 shows the alignment between the interview questions and this study’s research questions. Interview question A was designed to ascertain the participants’ definitions of mentoring, prior to and after being mentored, to explore any similarities or differences between the definition before and after engaging in mentoring relationships. Interview questions B and C allowed the participants to describe in detail aspects of their mentoring relationships and if the mentoring relationships were considered informal or formal. The MPQ provided additional information on the role of the mentors to support the participants’ responses to interview question D. Interview questions E-G asked the participants to consider the amount of time spent communicating
with their mentors, aspects of the relationships that may have changed over time, and the strengths and weaknesses of their mentoring relationships. Interview questions H and I explored outcome measures that the participants felt had the greatest and least influence on achieving tenure: (a) publication, (b) presentation or new poster, (c) new teaching method or strategy, (d) clinical expertise, (e) conducting research, (f) service activities (e.g., community service, political activity, professional organization), (g) development of a program, (h) job change or promotion, (i) grant writing/submission, and (j) “other” from the MPQ. Interview questions J and K asked the participants to describe their mentoring relationships’ influences on achieving tenure, and it probed for further information on the relationships in relation to achieving tenure. The MES provided additional information on the behavioral characteristics of the mentor to support the participants’ responses to the relational aspects of mentoring that were significant in achieving tenure. Interview question L addressed the potential and/or actual barriers faced by the participants. Throughout the interviews, the participants shared aspects of the mentoring relationships that may have helped to address any of the barriers described. Last, interview questions M and N asked the participants to offer advice to junior faculty and to make recommendations to institutions with respect to the creation or modification of formal mentoring programs.

**Research Participants**

Purposeful and chain referral sampling was used to recruit prospective participants from multiple social and/or professional networks of the designated gatekeepers who helped to facilitate access between the setting, the potential participants, and the researcher (Penrod et al., 2003). Seven Black women community college
professors were selected as the participants in this study. All the participants were identified with the pseudonym “P,” an abbreviation for “participant,” followed by assigned numbers 1-7 in order to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. The faculty rank of the participants included one assistant professor, four associate professors, and two full professors. The academic disciplines of the participants included social sciences, STEM, humanities, and health education. At the time of the interviews, all participants identified and described one mentor when referring to and answering interview questions.

Table 4.1

*Interview Questions Aligned to Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. How would you define mentoring prior to and after being mentored?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. How would you describe your relationship with your mentor?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Would you consider your mentoring relationship formal or informal?</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. On your Mentorship Profile Questionnaire (MPQ), you indicated the role of your mentor as… teacher, counselor, advisor, sponsor, advocate, resource. Can you describe that role?</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Other than what you indicated on the MPQ, and based on your work-life balance, do you feel the amount of time you spent communicating with your mentor was enough?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Based on your response to the length of time you had this relationship, are there any aspects of the relationship, such as the role of the mentor, that have changed over time?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Can you elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of your relationship? If you could change anything, what would it be?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. What outcome measure do you feel had the greatest influence on you achieving tenure? Why?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. What outcome measure do you feel had the least influence on you achieving tenure? Why?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. How would you describe your mentoring relationship’s influence on you achieving tenure?</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Is there any additional information you would like to share regarding your relationship with your mentor and achieving tenure?</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Research suggests that Black women faculty face barriers (social, institutional, cultural, etc.). Can you describe any barriers you experienced and aspects of your mentoring relationship that helped to address the barriers, or any other barriers not mentioned, if any?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Any advice you would offer to junior faculty?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Any recommendations you would offer to institutions with respect to mentoring programs?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrumentation

In this study, the researcher used the Berk et al. (2005) MPQ. The MPQ describes the mentoring relationship and outcome measures of the mentoring relationship from the perspective of the mentee (Berk et al., 2005). Prior to the start of the interviews, the participants were asked to complete the MPQ. The researcher then used the MPQ to identify mentoring episode outcomes and mentoring relationship outcomes based on the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of relational mentoring. In conjunction with the MPQ, the interviewees’ responses were used to provide narrative data on mentoring relationships (dynamics and behaviors), relational outcomes, and relational conditions identified in the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model. Further, the researcher used the Berk et al. (2005) MES. The MES is a 12-item Likert-type rating scale, which evaluates 12 behavioral characteristics of the mentor as reported by the mentee (Berk et al., 2005). The participants were also asked to complete the MES prior to the start of the interviews. This information was used to draw a connection to the participants’ interview responses and the mentoring relationships (dynamics and behaviors), relational outcomes, and relational conditions found in their relational mentoring experiences (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand tenured, Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. This research study explored the lived experiences of seven tenured, Black women community college professors at three community colleges within CUNY. All seven of the selected participants represented the
faculty population of full-time Black women faculty members within each of the selected community colleges. The researcher employed three cycles of coding to analyze the data. Interview transcript data and participants’ responses from the MPQ and MES were analyzed to identify emergent categories and themes. The participants’ responses to the MPQ, MES, and interview questions were cross-analyzed to validate research findings regarding the mentoring relationships (dynamics and behaviors), relational outcomes, and relational conditions identified in the study’s conceptual framework of the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of relational mentoring. This section delivers the participants’ responses to the MPQ, MES, and interview questions as they related to the study’s research questions. Where possible, the participants’ responses are presented in tables that correspond to the categories and themes that emerged from the study’s data. Additional tables and figures are presented to display the participants’ responses to data from the MPQ and MES.

**Research Question 1**

*How do tenured, Black women community college professors define mentoring?*

The participants were asked how they defined mentoring prior to being mentored and how, at the time of their interviews, they defined mentoring after being mentored. Responses to this question provided the researcher with insight into the definitions of mentoring as described by the prominent roles and behaviors of a mentor based on the participants’ perceptions and experiences. The respondents offered a holistic view of mentoring. The definitions prior to and after being mentored were consistent and are reflected in the codes, categories, and themes. In all, four categories and two themes were identified in the analysis of the interview data. Table 4.2 shows the codes, categories, and
themes that emerged from the participants’ responses to the interview question aligned to Research Question 1.

Table 4.2

*Mentoring Definitions – Codes, Categories, and Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hand holding, someone who is senior, providing personal and professional guidance and structure, struggling to finish doctoral degree, having insight into the possibilities and challenges, well-positioned, providing insight, helping, identifying what we need to do, passing on expertise, offering advice, understanding needs, teacher, counselor</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>Mentor Roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping to develop professionally and personally, pursuing a life of the mind, member of your support network, a trusted advisor, interested in your career advancement, willing to develop and guide you as a professional, attending to professional and personal development, positioning to help</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking in and respecting the whole person, mentoring the whole person, being open and honest, prioritizing needs, thinking holistically, identifying challenges, sharing fears, tapping into your own strength, radial reciprocity</td>
<td>Emotional Competence</td>
<td>Mentor Behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing reciprocal feelings of success, mutual respect, appreciation of background, active role, assistance, accomplishment of mutual goals, accessing, resources, someone who is an academic confidant, sharing similar work ethic, working well together, learning from each other</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutuality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Categories.** Four emergent categories were identified from the interview responses regarding the definition of mentoring: guidance, support, emotional competence, and mutuality. All of the participants noted that their definition of mentoring included having someone who was able to provide them with guidance and support as students pursuing their doctoral degrees and as new faculty members embarking on their careers in academia.

**Guidance.** During the interviews, several participants described a mentor as someone who is an experienced senior faculty member, working in the same field, and
viewed as a teacher and a counselor. Personal and professional guidance and insight were noted as important supports to be offered by an individual in a mentoring relationship. In providing a definition of mentoring, the participants provided descriptions of various roles and functions of their mentors. Processes involved in mentoring were generally described as functions, characteristics, and behaviors of the mentor. P1 offered a definition of mentoring as a function of her mentor, noting: “somebody to hold my hand.” In further defining mentoring, P1 reflected on an encounter with a previous mentor who she initially thought would provide support and guidance to her during her journey toward obtaining her doctoral degree:

That was actually a very hurtful time, particularly because my first advisor was a woman of color. I thought, if nothing else, she would understand the need to get support and guidance and to be a voice to troubleshoot and to be able to be real with, and talk about what feels hard and challenging, like to pick me up when I felt like I was ready to quit. Rather, she, I think, discouraged me more than encouraged me.

After finding a new mentor, P1 provided a description of the behaviors and qualities of her second mentor:

Ultimately, the person who became my mentor after I stopped dealing with my advisor was someone who I could be open and honest with, who I could express my fears with, who became a friend and a confidant, but who most definitely was senior to me, had a lot of experience, had experience in academia, and who was well-positioned to guide me through and give me a sense of what I needed to be thinking about if I was pursuing a particular path. For me, a mentor initially was
someone to help me get me through my awful dissertation, but that process helped me to understand that we need to have someone who can guide us and who has insights into the possibilities and the challenges, and can help us identify what we need to do within ourselves to navigate different roads and challenges that we might face.

P5 noted, “I would say someone that looks out for you, someone that has your back, someone that’s able to help guide you. . . . someone that provides guidance, structure.” P2 reflected on her definition of mentoring:

A person who is senior to someone, but also has a unique understanding of the path that the person they’re mentoring is taking and can offer advice on a robust scale of how to manage that path. And that’s from work/home balance, balancing research, and teaching. . . . what would be most helpful as a mentor with a role for me, now, is someone who is ahead of me who can offer advice on how to navigate the environment that I’m in, so I can get to the next step.

P1 concluded in her definition of mentoring:

I think some of the qualities I was looking for, I still feel the same about, but I think, ultimately, a mentor is that person who can help others . . . carve out their own self-definition, identify their strengths and abilities, and push them to see beyond that, to see what is possible. A mentor is somebody who, yeah, can guide you and provide you with support, but also, really help you to tap into your own strengths and recognize your own abilities, and help you cultivate a vision of yourself that is beyond where you are right now.
**Support.** The participants expressed that support was an essential role of a mentor. A mentor, as defined by the participants, is someone who is a member of one’s support network and willing to develop that person as a professional. P4 offered a perspective on support in the definition of mentoring:

I see mentoring as not only of the thing the person that you’re helping develop with methodological expertise, publication opportunities, presentation opportunities, not only attending to professional development, but also personal development. And I feel like it’s the personal development. . . . I’ve been mentored by so many people but that I needed both professional guidance and kind of . . . I wouldn’t even say hand holding, but, pursuing a life of the mind; it’s like a thing that is so distinct from other professions that comes with its own anxieties, uncertainties, or whatever.

P3 stated: “I would consider the mentor, that would be someone who was interested in my development as a professional, who positioned their self to help me professionally.” Participant 7 also reflected on the support of her mentor:

Somebody who had experience and who had achieved in the particular field, who would then be passing on their expertise to me to guide my own personal and professional development in that same field. And I would have seen this as somebody who I would work closely with, in order to learn from them and to advance my professional development.

P5 offered a definition of mentoring, noting, “well, I would say someone that really has your back. That’s how I would call it. Someone that has your back personally, professionally, spiritually.”
**Emotional Competence.** Emotional competence was also noted as an emergent category related to Research Question 1. The participants noted emotional competence as an important behavior of a mentor. The participants identified having the ability to think holistically about the needs of an individual as an important behavioral attribute for a mentor. P4 offered a definition of mentoring after being mentored as, “I think I put more weight into checking-in and respecting the whole person. Knowing that I’m not mentoring your mind, dude. I’m mentoring a whole person.” P4 reflected on her journey to achieving tenure, adding how she functioned as a mentor to her students, noting, “I think surviving this process has me giving a slightly more weight checking-in on them, especially the mental health; the spiritual health of the people that I am mentoring.”

**Mutuality.** Mutuality was another emergent category related to Research Question 1. The participants verbalized mutuality as a behavior of the mentor: sharing feelings of success, respect, an appreciation of each other’s backgrounds, and accomplishment of mutual goals are essential in forming bonds of mutuality. Forming egalitarian relationships, where mentor and protégé share similar work ethics and work well together in a personal and professional relationship, are the distinguished mentor behaviors identified in the participants’ definition of mentoring after being mentored. P5 reflected on mutuality and reciprocity in mentoring relationships:

I would also say someone that has your best interest in mind because, and again, going back to the personally, professionally, spiritually, academically, someone that wants you to succeed, because I always tell my students, “your success is my success, and your success is my reward.”
P4 emphasized the importance of mutuality in mentoring:

Where I think, as I forge relationships, collegial relationships, and mentor relationships, I also check whether that person is also checking-in on my wellness to determine whether or not this [relationship] is something that I’m going to pursue. Yeah, so I think reciprocity is one thing, but I write about this as radical reciprocity. . . . radical reciprocity is like . . . “what do you need of me for you to be involved in this project?” And that can be writing you a letter of recommendation, offering editorial advice, co-authoring a paper, co-editing a special issue.

P3 shared her experience in defining mentoring as, “I would say it’s a professional and personal relationship that develops from mutual respect and it’s not a one-sided relationship.” P6 noted a similar perspective on mutuality in defining mentoring as an individual who takes an “active role in assisting you to accomplish your mutual goals.”

**Themes.** Two themes relating to Research Question 1, and the categories of guidance, support, emotional competence, and mutuality were identified in the analysis of the interview data, based on the participants’ responses to the interview questions, asking the participants how they defined mentoring prior to being mentored, and how they, at the time of their interviews, defined mentoring after being mentored. Mentor roles and mentor behaviors were the emergent themes.

**Mentor Roles.** Mentor roles were identified as an emergent theme relating to Research Question 1. Based on the participants’ responses, mentor roles were significant in providing a definition of mentoring. The participants explained that the role of the
mentor is one of hand holding, helping, and understanding. Providing professional and personal guidance and structure were also mentioned as important elements in the role of a mentor.

**Mentor Behaviors.** Mentor behaviors were noted as another emergent theme that was related to Research Question 1. Mentors who are able to exemplify emotional competence and mutuality are essential behaviors within a mentoring relationship. Checking-in and respecting the whole person were noted as being instrumental in both the personal and professional development of the participants. Radical reciprocity was referenced in this study as true mutual partnering that is negotiated at the onset of, and throughout, the mentoring relationship.

The emergent categories and themes derived from the interview responses connected to Research Question 1 fill a need in the research literature by providing a starting point in creating an operational definition of mentoring, indicating mentoring lacks an operational definition.

**Research Question 2**

*What relational aspects of mentoring are significant in achieving tenure?* The researcher asked the participants to describe the relational aspects significant in achieving tenure. The participants responded to the interview questions exploring the most salient features of relational mentoring. Analysis of the participant interview data revealed seven emergent categories and three themes. Table 4.3 displays the codes, categories, and themes that related to Research Question 2.
Table 4.3

Relational Aspects of Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping navigate through critical transitions, open, friendly,</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>Mentoring Relationship: Dynamic &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trustworthy, creating opportunities to give informal guidance on</td>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helping to navigate institutional environments and politics, making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sure there is no reason to deny when tenure decision is made,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visibility on campus</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone who you could be honest with, being open, friendly, and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supportive with each other, being able to share ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement, motivation to achieve clearly established goals,</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Relational Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making the decision to conduct research, working with undergraduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students of color, focusing on teaching, learning, and education,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exploring opportunities in academia</td>
<td>Empowered Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively supporting a junior faculty mentoring program, advocacy,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>becoming a mentor to junior faculty, power influences on choices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a mentor, being part of a larger revolution to lift people up,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being a role model for students of color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual partnership negotiated at the onset of the relationship,</td>
<td>Mutuality</td>
<td>Relational Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mutual feelings of friendship with mentor, honesty, open communication, mentorship dynamics shifted to becoming peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, informal, comfortable, sternness communicated by</td>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentor is a strength in the relationship, did not walk on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“eggshells,” “ruthlessly honest”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring relationship influenced scholarship, personal growth,</td>
<td>Fluidity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multidirectional fluidity in expertise, mentor become family,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sisterly, professional, academic confidant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Categories.** Seven categories were identified based on an interpretation of the participant responses describing the relational aspects of mentoring that are significant in achieving tenure: guidance, interdependence, engagement, empowered action, mutuality, authenticity, and fluidity.

**Guidance.** Each participant noted guidance as being an impactful factor in the mentoring relationship. The participants expressed that a mentor is instrumental in helping to navigate through critical transitions as a Black woman in academia. Being open, friendly, and trustworthy are notable characteristics in the development of the
mentoring relationship. The participants noted that mentors can create opportunities for informal guidance when helping to navigate institutional environments and politics often found in academia. P2 shared:

This was a mentor who found me. She’s another African American scholar, who was at my graduate institution and was like, “I see you. Let’s go to lunch. I’m here. This is where I am.” She was in my graduate program. She was faculty in the program, so she understood everything . . . she really helped me navigate through that, and then through all of my critical transitions. . . she’ll provide that kind of professional care I need.

P5 mentioned that her mentor acknowledged the limited number of tenure-track opportunities available for Black women in academia and expressed her that if P5 wanted to succeed, she would need to do whatever it took to secure that job in academia. P5’s mentor advised:

If you get the chance to get that job, you make sure you do not let them dictate whether you’re going to get tenure or not. You make sure that by the time you’re up to that point, there’s no denying you.

P5 concluded with, “That is what she told me, and that is what I did.”

P2 discussed how her mentor helped her to maintain high visibility on campus by informing her of the existence of, and guiding her toward, various opportunities. P2 further explained:

I guess the most benefit I got from the relationship was that she helped me navigate on campus, where I needed to be. Maybe there was a committee I didn’t even know existed and she would say, “Well I’m going to nominate you for this
opportunity, just to make sure that [you] maintain high visibility on the campus,”
which was really good for me building my professional persona. And making sure
that I meet the right people. When she went into administration, if there were
some dignitaries coming to campus, she would be sure to include me, “Oh, this
person is in Houston, and I know you might want to go back there, so drop by my
office at such and such time so I can introduce you.” So, she was really
instrumental in helping me become a professional, . . . she really helped me shape
my identity as a woman in science, and how to have the confidence to know what
to do, and how to approach people and conduct myself in environments where
there’s not too many women in science, and certainly women of color.

**Interdependence.** Interdependence was noted as an emergent category relating to
the relational aspects of mentoring being significant in achieving tenure. The participants
noted mutual dependence within the mentoring relationship as one where honesty,
openness, friendliness, support, and ideas were shared mutually in the relationship.
Interdependence was also referenced by the participants in describing how each party
within the mentoring relationship was dependent upon each other and could have
possibly contributed to the mentoring relationship’s dynamics and behaviors. P3
emphasized:

The current mentorship relationship that I have, we actually help each other.
Professionally, she’s senior, but I guess when it comes to talent and things to
offer, we equally can give to each other maybe not equally, but we can both give
to each other.
P3 discussed the dynamics of her mentoring relationship as being open and friendly, where she is able to share her ideas, thoughts, and opinions with her mentor, adding, “we can have conversations with each other about those things, which is also a [thing of] trust and respect.”

**Encouragement.** Encouragement was noted as an emergent category relating to the relational aspects of mentoring being significant in achieving tenure. The participants expressed that their mentors provided motivation to achieve clearly established goals. Especially, P2 expressed that her mentor prepared her for success in her career in academia, noting: “You make sure everything on the table is rock solid. And because of that, it’s kind of in my mind . . . you don’t want anything to jeopardize your tenure.” P2 further explained how her mentor was instrumental in helping her to explore a different pathway for her success in academia when she discovered her passion for research and working with undergraduate students of color.

Each participant discussed the importance of exploring and taking advantage of the opportunities in academia. P2 explained:

It was just a matter of finding the right institutional fit for where I wanted to establish my career going forward. And, I think that being at the community college level allows me to keep all the pieces that I find important. . . . [To] still have that professional profile that I want. But also, as an academician, really focusing on teaching and learning and education. And all of that is valued. So, finding a college that values all of those components, and so that’s kind of been the impetus for my career trajectory going forward.
Each participant shared the need for securing tenure for job security and career advancement. One participant viewed her achieving tenure as an opportunity to continue advancing in her professional career, stating:

The next ladder that I have to climb is full professor. . . and unfortunately, I’m surrounded by people who, they get tenure, and they check out. And I never want to be that person that checks out. I understand the value of community college because I see how it transformed my life.

**Empowered Action.** Each participant discussed ways their mentoring relationships helped to move them into action to advocate for not only themselves but for others. For example, P7 discussed how instrumental her mentoring relationship was in the development of a departmental mentoring program:

It’s interesting that I, perhaps, didn’t realize the extent to which this relationship was important. And, yet, maybe on some other level, I did because I know one of the things I did . . . was . . . [I] actively support[ed] a mentoring program within our department to assign mentors to new faculty, and to put in requirements about how often mentors should meet with mentees and what sorts of activities they should be involved with. So, I suppose on some, maybe, subconscious level, I recognize[d] how important having a mentor [was] on their behalf.

Findings from the research concluded empowered action resulted from the participants’ ability to be motivated into action as a result of relational interactions with their mentor. P5 remarked on what her mentor said:

One of the things that sticks out, “If you don’t eat, sleep, live this thing, you are not going to be successful at it.” And that’s what I did. Anything the woman told
me. Because I trusted her at this point, and I knew that she had my back, and she wanted me to succeed. The advisement that she gave me was always solid. It never failed. It was always pure. It was always genuine, and it was exactly what I needed. And, so, when I am mentoring now, I carry that with me 100%. I carry that with me because I know how much I needed it.

P1 reflected on her admiration and love for her mentor:

I . . . take satisfaction in knowing that she influenced me greatly in ways that she doesn’t even understand, because she truly was this sort of constant, strong woman who was kind and strong, who had a vision and wasn’t afraid to present that vision. It’s like, “okay, so my vision is different from yours, and that’s okay. You’re going to respect my vision, and I’m going to do my thing, and I’m going to make my impact, and I’m going to have [an] impact on the lives of others, and those people are going to pay it forward and pay it back. We’ll get a ground swell and get a whole revolution of lifting up people.” I would have to guess that she’s influenced my desire to mentor others.

**Mutuality.** The participants highlighted mentorship as being a mutual and reciprocal partnership established at the beginning of the relationship. While most of the participants indicated their mentoring relationships as being informal, the relationship was marked by open communication and respect. The participants provided examples of empowered action as one of “the five good things” Miller and Stivey (1987) noted as an outcome of growth-fostering interactions. P5 described mutuality in the context of being multidirectional, noting, “I think the things that we’ve shared with each other. Life experiences, professional experiences, the advisement that we’ve both given each other at
this point. So, yeah, I would definitely say it would be a mutual situation there.” P7 remarked on the transformation of her relationship with her mentor from being a mentor-protégé relationship to a friendship, noting,

Yeah, so we’ve very much moved from junior faculty, senior faculty to peers.

And we’ve also become friends, so that even though that person is no longer with the college, we’re still in touch with each other, . . . I feel like, now, we provide mutual peer support rather than a mentor-mentee, situation. So, we’ve become peers and [are], perhaps, at the same level now.

The participants further commented that mutuality is developed from a place of vulnerability to security where both parties are able to share aspects of their lives that contribute to the personal and professional growth and development of the individuals within the relationship. P2 shared:

Because our relationship transcended from the formal to the informal, it’s now like, “Hey, how are you doing? What’s going on?” And if either one of us has any kind of questions or anything, it’s kind of like a girlfriend-type situation at this point.

**Authenticity.** Authenticity was noted as being paramount in the participants’ mentoring relationships. P4 noted that her mentor was “ruthlessly honest” with her:

I would say, as it pertains to professional decisions, . . . I’m going to make a major move, then I’m going to email her. I’m going to email her and text her, and some things she co-signs, and other things she won’t, but she’s never going to lie to me. There’s ruthless honesty. I think I rely on her to vet people who say they
want to work with me or [who are] inviting me to a space that I’m sure she’s more familiar with than I am.

P3 shared a similar experience:

Being able to be honest with each other and communicate openly, that’s really how you can get things done and accomplished. Intimacy or superficial relationships actually don’t get you good results. . . . she wasn’t a mentor who was ambivalent to my success. She really wanted me to be successful, and she thought that I [was] successful.

P5 shared that she valued the insight and structure her mentor provided to her, noting,

With her being stern when she needed to be with me. I don’t take that as a weakness. I take that as a strength. . . . like, “No, you got to do this. You have to handle your business here. You’re slacking here, do what you have to do here.”

P7 commented, “We became friends through the process, but we wouldn’t have been friends in the beginning. This person was obviously more senior to me.”

Fluidity. Fluidity was noted as an emergent category because the participants noted that mentoring relationships helped to influenced scholarship and professional growth. Multidirectional fluidity in expertise was described as the sharing of expertise between both the mentor and the protégé. One participant noted having an opportunity to co-author an article with her mentor; while another participant shared that she helped her mentor with new technology and teaching methods. The emergent themes aligned with Research Question 2 are discussed in the next section.

Themes. A priori and in vivo coding methods were used to extract the interview data into three themes identified in the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of
relational mentoring. Three themes were identified based on an interpretation of the participant responses describing aspects of relational mentoring that are significant in achieving tenure. Analyzing and understanding the aspects of relational mentoring, which is significant in achieving tenure, provides introspection into the lived experiences of the Black women community college professors.

**Mentoring Relationships: Dynamics and Behaviors.** Mentoring relationships: dynamics and behaviors, provided insight into the role of the mentor and the behavioral patterns as a result of the interaction between the mentor and protégé. Guidance and interdependence were noted as important relational aspects found within the mentoring relationship and they were described as positive indicators of successful tenure based on the lived experiences of the participants.

**Relational Outcomes.** Relational outcomes, such as encouragement and empowered action, emerged as one of the themes associated with Research Question 2. The participants emphasized that exploration of opportunities and visibility on campus were important as they were encouraged and empowered by their mentors to serve as an advocate for themselves and others. The participants expressed that tenure was ultimately achieved and highly influenced by their mentoring relationship. In addition, the relational outcomes as described by the participants were instrumental in helping to advance the participants’ professional careers.

**Relational Conditions.** Mutual partnerships, honest, communication, and multidirectional fluidity were commonalities in the participant responses relating to the relational aspects of mentoring that are significant in achieving tenure.

*Formality of Mentoring Relationships*
Interview data revealed the participant responses to the length and formality of their mentoring relationships, answering the MPQ question: “How long have you had this relationship?” Table 4.4 illustrates the participants’ responses.

Table 4.4

*Mentoring Relationship – Length of Relationship and Formality of Relationship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Length of Relationship (Years)</th>
<th>Formality of Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participant responses revealed that the lengths of the mentoring relationships were essential to the development of the relationship in terms of intimacy and growth. P1 was the only participant who indicated that her mentoring relationship was formal. She also emphasized that she wanted to be mentored by another woman of color; however, after a hurtful experience with her initial advisor, she began to question if she wanted to search for another mentor:

Maybe sisters don’t want to support sisters, but I think there was a generational divide between me and my first mentor, which did not exist with my second mentor. . . . I still was intentional about wanting a person of color because, quite frankly, most of my professors were White males, and I think I had had enough of the experience[s] I had with some of them. . . . I had had far too many experiences
feeling marginalized by some of the other White males, so I wanted a person of color to be my mentor. That just felt important to me, because I felt I could be real, and I could be me, and I didn’t have to explain myself and explain some of my challenges or circumstances that I was dealing with.

P1 further added:

The person who I selected as my mentor, in one sense, was a formal mentor at the time when we came together, because she had a very specific role in terms of helping me and guiding me to completion [doctoral degree], but when I completed and graduated, and we were officially done, formally done, then I kept her and held her as my unofficial, informal mentor because, quite frankly, . . . I don’t even think I thought about this at the time. There was no one else.

One participant noted that due to the organizational structure within her institution, no formal mentoring program existed, and her mentor was viewed more like an advisor than a mentor. The participant further expressed that her mentoring relationship was informal due to “the institution’s political atmosphere and discord between the department chairperson and my mentor.” Another participant shared that, at the beginning of her mentoring relationship, she was unaware of how well-known her mentor was and felt that because of that, she and her mentor worked well together.

Role of the Mentor

The participants were asked to describe the role of their mentors based on the MPQ. Table 4.5 displays the participant responses, derived from the MPQ, and the frequency of the mentoring descriptions selected by the participants’ responses.

Table 4.5
### Role of Mentor – Frequency of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of the Mentor</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that the role of the mentor described as a *teacher* was noted by P1 and P7. The role of the mentor described as a *counselor* was noted by P3 and P5. The role of the mentor identified as an *advisor* was noted by all seven participants. P5 explained that her mentor’s role was a combination of a teacher, counselor, and adviser, noting, “She taught me a lot . . . she taught me a ton about life, about her work ethic. As a person in the business of academia, I’ve never seen anyone work harder than her, period.” When asked to describe the role of her mentor, P6 stated:

*She was, in terms of [an] advisor, she would suggest things that I needed to do. Because I didn’t have a formal mentor, so I was not aware. Literally I was told, “You’re going to have to publish to get tenure . . . it’s not just that, you need to make sure that you get your name out there. You need to join committees; you need to get visibility in the college. Yes, you need to publish, but you need this, too, because when you go up for promotion or for tenure, the [committee] is behind closed doors . . . and your chair is going to present you.”*

Last, the role of the mentor described as a *resource* was noted by P2, P3, and P6. P3 noted the role of her mentor as a counselor, advisor, advocate, and resource:
A counselor is someone that I can talk to about issues, and she would, and these issues don’t necessarily have to be professional . . . she’d be someone who you could vent with personally or professionally. And I think in the role of counselor, they don’t necessarily provide answers, but they help you to verbalize your thoughts and feelings. . . . I would say advisor, too, because, she’s had a lot of experience on campus, and she could say the best person to talk about this issue. . . . Resource, again, she has a lot of experience in getting things and, so, “if you need this, then you talk to . . . these people.” Advocate, the times that she’s actually advocated for me are very limited, but I do feel like she’s a person that if the doors were closed, she would say, “hey, she's a great person.”

None of the participants noted the role of the mentor as a sponsor. The findings of the MES were consistent with the participants’ interview responses as well as the study’s themes of mentoring behaviors of dynamics and behaviors, relational conditions, and relational skills.

**MES**

The MES is a 12-item Likert-type rating scale that evaluates 12 behavioral characteristics of the mentor (Berk et al., 2005). All the participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of their mentors on the MES. The scale was used to provide additional information on the relational characteristics of the participants’ mentors. Berk et al. (2005) suggested that measurements of item analysis, validity, and reliability cannot be calculated. This researcher employed triangulation to assess the degree to which the participants consistently responded to items on the MES, in comparison to their interview
Figure 4.1 shows the total number of consolidated participant responses to the MES, having asked the participants to rate the effectiveness of their mentors.

**Figure 4.1**

*Results from Participant Response to the MES*

As shown in Figure 4.1, the MES statement 3, “My mentor demonstrated content expertise in my area of need,” a response of “Disagree” was given only by one participant. Another participant responded to MES statement 3 as “Slightly Disagree.” MES statement 6, “My mentor provided constructive and useful critiques of my work,” a response of “Not applicable” was given only by one participant. MES statement 7, “My mentor motivated me to improve my work product,” indicated a response of “Not Applicable” by one participant. It should also be noted that the same participant, during her interview, mentioned that her mentor was not in her field of study as a researcher and
was unable to provide her with constructive and useful critiques of her work. It was because of her mentor not being in her field of study as a researcher, a response of “Not Applicable” to MES statement 6 was provided. The findings of the MES were consistent with the participants’ interview responses as well as the study’s themes of mentoring behaviors of dynamics and behaviors, relational conditions, and relational skills.

**Research Question 3**

*How are outcome measures associated with tenure influenced by mentoring relationships?* The participants responded to the interview questions asking to describe outcome measures, based on the MPQ, that had the greatest and the least influence on their achieving tenure and their mentoring relationships’ influence on achieving tenure. A priori and in vivo coding methods were used to separate the interview data into eight categories and four themes. The coding analysis of the data related to Research Question 3 were derived from the Berk et al. (2005) MPQ outcome measures and the *Statement of the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice in the City University of New York* (1975) criteria used to grant tenure. Table 4.6 displays the codes, categories, and themes associated with the interview data based on the participant responses aligned with Research Question 3.
Table 4.6

Outcome Measures Influenced by Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taught mentor new teaching method/strategy, no relevance in engaging in new teaching methods/strategies, no clear guidelines on teaching methods/strategies, every department does their own thing, expectations of having good teaching evaluations and observations, used an integrated approach to teaching and research that “set me apart”</td>
<td>New Teaching Method/Strategy</td>
<td>Teaching Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggled with initial publication, but after initial submission, it became easier, opportunities to publish a journal article with mentor, conceptualized the need to engage in a range of activities, no definite number of publications, mentor assisted with research</td>
<td>Publication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting with mentor, emphasis on publishing and presenting on your dissertation, getting your name out there</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Scholarship and Professional Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions are looking for well-rounded scholars, leadership training did not help with tenure, but clearly defined my role within institution, crafted a merging of scholarship and professional growth, “able to distinguish myself as a leader”</td>
<td>Leadership Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided advice and support when applying for a leadership position, early promotion, specialized integration of experimental learning “set me apart”</td>
<td>Job Change/Promotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor encouraged involvement in college-wide service activities, junior faculty struggle with service activities, mentor assisted with access to limited service opportunities, “way too much service”</td>
<td>Service Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed a programmatic integrated curriculum, supported the proposal for a new academic program, provided guidance on development a new academic major (concentration)</td>
<td>Development of a Program</td>
<td>Service to the Institution and Service to the Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited assistance with grant writing, development of skills and cross-discipline collaboration, irony of not learning grant writing, paradoxically learned after tenure, assisted in the co-authoring of three institutional grants</td>
<td>Grant Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Categories. Eight categories were identified, based on an interpretation of the participant responses describing outcome measures, based on the MPQ, that had the
greatest and least influence on achieving tenure and their mentoring relationships’ influence on achieving tenure.

*New Teaching Method/Strategy.* P3 noted that her mentor assisted her in developing new teaching strategies for a new course. P3 further noted her mentor’s assistance as being instrumental in her peer observations. P6 shared the reciprocity in her relationship with her mentor, noting that because her mentor displayed difficulties in accessing and navigating the technology, she provided her mentor with assistance. P6 further mentioned that her mentor was helpful to her in other areas. All of the participants acknowledged the importance of teaching as a function and expectation as a faculty member; however, they all felt confident in their ability to effectively teach. One participant expressed frustration with have no clear guidelines on teaching methods and strategies because of the subjective degree of bias in student evaluations and peer observations, and the inconsistencies in the expectations from department to department. The participant expressed her frustration:

> The college may provide guidelines, but every department does their own fucking thing, which is very distressing when you’re trying to figure out the thing that you’re supposed to do, and you’re getting the right advice from inside and outside.

P1 shared a similar perspective, adding that she felt there was no relevance in engaging in new teaching methods/strategies based on how she perceived the hidden message to be, “Are you effective in the classroom by the way students measure you and the way your peers evaluate you?”
**Publication.** P1 discussed how publishing was the most challenging aspect in her journey to tenure:

That’s the part I struggled with and, in the end, my mentor had to connect to me. With a collaborator in the college and from it, we were able to generate a paper. It then seemed like getting that first paper out sort of made it easier to get the next one, and so on. . . . Perhaps that was the one that was the most vital to keeping me on track for tenure.

P1 and P5 shared similar experiences with their mentors encouraging them both to conduct research and publish in respected journals in an effort to get exposure. P1 commented that she was able to co-author papers with her mentor noting, “she helped me to conceptualize the need to engage in a range of activity that you can add to your CV and enhance what you look like to others on the outside who don’t know you.” P1 indicated that because of her authoring, several publications, and presenting at professional conferences, it was instrumental in her achieving tenure. P3 also reflected on her having an opportunity to co-author a journal article with her mentor.

**Presentation.** Presenting at professional conferences as a way of getting recognized was viewed as an outcome measure associated with tenure that was influenced by the participants’ mentoring relationships. The participants noted that presenting with their mentor helped with “getting your name out there.” P1 mentioned how her mentor encouraged her to present the research she conducted based on the findings in her dissertation.

**Leadership Training.** Leadership training was considered essential in the development of a well-rounded and potential leader within an organization; however, it
was noted as an outcome measure that was not influenced by the participants’ mentoring relationships. The participants noted their personal drive to engage in leadership training for the purposes of promotion and being in spaces with other women in academia. P1 was the only participant who indicated that, while leadership training was not an outcome measure that helped with her receiving tenure, she mentioned that her participation in leadership training helped to “clearly define my role at this institution and how I wanted to contribute to this institute in assuming leadership roles.”

**Job Change/Promotion.** Job change/promotion was perceived by the participants as contributing to their tenure. P4 and P2 described their ability to excel in the areas of effective teaching and publishing, which led to early promotion and the crafting of a portfolio that separated them from other faculty members. P7 noted that her mentor provided advice and support when she was applying to a leadership position within their institution.

**Service Activities.** The participants share different perspectives on the availability of service activities within their institutions, and their level of involvement in services within their institutions that were considered to be an outcome measure influenced by their mentoring relationship. P6 described how influential her mentor was in encouraging her to become a member of the institution’s college-wide senate committee for visibility. P3 added that she was able to gain access to service activities through her mentor by working on college-wide activities. P3 stated, “working with her allowed me to have college-wide contributions and a lot of junior faculty struggle to get college-wide contributions. Working with her, I didn’t have to struggle to get them.” One participant noted that she participated in, “way too much service.” The participant added that she
became heavily involved in service activities so that she could write her own narrative as a Black female academician and to not leave it to her academic chairperson to represent her to the institution’s board members that grant tenure. The participant further described her feelings about being the first Black female faculty member to be actively involved within the institution:

It made me really angry and uncomfortable that there was a presumption that other women of color didn’t care or lack the ability to do it. So, okay, I’ll do this, but I also suffered the emotional toll of being the first.

P6 added how her mentor was very instrumental in helping her decide in which type of service activities to be involved.

**Development of a New Program.** Three participants described how their mentors supported and guided them in the development of a programmatic, integrated curriculum, a new academic major (concentration), and the submission of a proposal for a new academic program.

**Grant Writing.** Grant writing was noted as an outcome measure that had the least influence on the participants gaining tenure. P1 noted the irony and paradox of not learning granting writing until after receiving tenure. P3 noted that she assisted with the co-authoring of three institutional grants. P2 noted that how taking advantage of grant writing to develop writing skills and cross-discipline collaboration could be helpful for professional and career advancement.

**Themes.** Four themes relating to Research Question 3 emerged from an analysis of the interview data of the participant responses: teaching effectiveness, scholarship and professional growth, service to the institution, and service to the public.
**Teaching Effectiveness.** According to the *Statement of the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice in the City University of New York* (1975), tenure appointments are granted “only when there is clear evidence of the individual’s ability and diligence as a teacher” (p. 8).

**Scholarship and Professional Growth.** According to the *Statement of the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice in the City University of New York* (1975), tenure is granted in this manner:

Evidence of new and creative work shall be sought in the candidate’s published research or in his instructional materials and techniques when they incorporate new ideas or scholarly research. Works should be evaluated as well as listed, and work in progress should be assessed. When work is a product of a joint effort, it is the responsibility of the department chairman to establish as clearly as possible the role of the candidate in the joint effort. (p. 8)

**Service to the Institution.** According to the *Statement of the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice in the City University of New York* (1975), tenure is also granted in this manner:

The faculty plays an important role in the formulation and implementation of University policy, and in the administration of the University. Faculty members should therefore be judged on the degree and quality of their participation in college and University government. Similarly, faculty contributions to student welfare, through service on committees or as an advisor to student organizations, should be recognized. (p. 8)
Service to the Public. According to the Statement of the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice in the City University of New York (1975), tenure appointments are granted based on “service to the community, state and nation, both in the faculty member’s special capacity as a scholar and in areas beyond this when the work is pertinent and significant, should be recognized” (p. 9).

Research Question 4

How do mentoring relationships help navigate barriers (potential and/or actual), if any, in academia? The participants responded to interview questions for a description of potential and/or actual barriers they faced and aspects of the mentoring relationships that may have helped to address any of the described barriers. An analysis of the participant interview data revealed five emergent categories and two themes. Table 4.7 displays the codes, categories, and themes that relate to Research Question 4.

Categories. Five emergent categories were identified from the interview responses on the potential and/or actual barriers faced by the participants and aspects of the mentoring relationships that helped to address any of the described barriers of professional sustainability, time and task management, self-advocacy, cultural integration, and support networks/resources.

Professional Sustainability. Professional sustainability emerged as a category relating to Research Question 4. Seeking out a mentor, being aware of openly hostile and obstructionist behaviors of other faculty members, avoiding tokenism, and resisting race and gender oppression were noted as ways the participants were able to persist in their professional careers in academia. All of the participants noted that mentorship is significant in professional sustainability. P2 highlighted the importance of having a
mentor as a junior faculty member. For example, P2 noted that if she did not succeed in academia, it would be attributed to the mentorship she did not receive as a junior faculty member.

Table 4.7

*Navigating Barriers in Academia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting a mentor, relying on outside people to guide you through the process, avoiding tokenism, professional jealousy, being aware of openly hostile and obstructionist behaviors, covering yourself, professional networking, resisting race and gender oppression, setting a professional tone in the classroom, developing creative approaches to scholarly research and publishing</td>
<td>Professional Sustainability</td>
<td>Human Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not becoming invisible with service work, being visible with service that is meaningful, being realistic about the process, having a balance, being purposeful with presentations and publications</td>
<td>Time and Task Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing yourself, learning to say no, helping to discover new ways of thinking about yourself, valuing you time and wellness, boldness in saying what everyone else is thinking, objecting to “double standards”</td>
<td>Self-Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating a greater sense of trust in myself, finding a circle of advisors who can help, reflecting back who you are, not looking for validation within oppressive structures, inserting yourself in spaces that deserve you</td>
<td>Cultural Integration</td>
<td>Social Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence, support throughout the process, having realistic conversations about life/work balance, prioritizing work, and personal life obligations</td>
<td>Support Networks and Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P2 stated:

I did not have the appropriate mentorship to navigate my career pathway, at all, during my associate professor track. I didn’t have it. I’m struggling now, because I’m an associate, so there’s one more step. . . . I do think I have found that circle of advisors that can help me in their individual ways to do what needs to be done.
P1 reflected on her viewpoint of having to rely on an outside person to help get through the tenure process. While P1 found guidance outside of her institution, she added, “my feeling was that people here shouldn’t have to rely on outside people.” P3 described her affiliation with a fellowship that allowed her to collaborate with other prominent female scholars stating, “I learned to rely on outside people to convince people at my department how dope I was.” P3 described professional jealousy as a barrier, as she reflected on several occasions where she experienced sarcastic and patronizing comments and attitudes from a colleague. P3 noted that as time went on, she realized that the colleague was purposely negative and did things to get in the way of her progress. P3 further described how her mentor encouraged her to move past those incidences, acknowledging that her hard work and efforts to be collegial with that particular colleague were noticed.

P2 reflected on experiences with tokenism and noted that the increased service commitment is a burden all faculty of color experiences in academia. P2 also described feelings of being asked to represent the institution on committees as a Black woman faculty member so that the institution would not be perceived as an institution that does not hire Black and Brown faculty. Recalling that she has been asked, “Can you be on this committee because it deals with the board, and basically we don’t want them to know we’re not hiring Black and Brown faculty, so can you be on the committee?” P2 emphasized that she did not have formal mentoring within her institution to help navigate the described instances, however, she noted that as a mentor, she helps junior faculty to choose in which service activities to become involved.

P7 shared her experiences with race and gender oppression by male students:
I know I’ve had to push back against male students who seem to think that having a Black woman professor meant that they could take certain liberties, with respect to the power dynamics in the classroom. . . . I felt that my physical presentation as a professional was important to setting a tone in my classroom that said, “I am in charge here, and nobody else.”

**Time and Task Management.** All of the participants mentioned how teaching, advisement, mentoring, service commitments, and scholarly research can overburden Black women community college professors. P4 shared her perspective of the invisible labor of Black professors, noting that she felt that some of her colleagues were placed in service positions that made them invisible. P4 also noted that this type of invisibility makes it difficult for professional evaluations, which is due to the over consumption of time for service work. P4 emphasized that it is important to be visible in service that is considered a criterion of tenure by the institution. P5 recalled how she was purposeful in her presentations and publications by always remembering the guidance her mentor provided to her in stating, “You make sure that by the time you’re up to that point, there’s no denying you [tenure].” P5 further explained that having a balance is key to sustaining professionally in academia and throughout the tenure process:

Being realistic about this process that you will lose sleep, you will lose hair, you will lose money. Being realistic that this is hard. It’s hard. . . . It is a difficult process. You have to make time for your outside life. You have to have balance. You’ve got to try your best. It’s not easy, but you got to try your best to create balance.
**Self-Advocacy.** Self-advocacy was an emergent category that was based on the participants’ responses. P1 shared that when she started her career in academia, she was the only Black women in her department. She recalled, “there were no sister soldiers around who I could commiserate with.” P1 remembers asking her mentor how she managed to deal with unwelcoming spaces in academia, noting the valuable advice that her mentor, who was well-respected in academia, provided to her: “Know who you are, know your strengths, know what you bring, and don’t ever let anybody suggest to you that you bring anything less.” P2 spoke of how she learned to say “no” to service opportunities as a form of self-advocacy as an untenured faculty member with time constraints on getting her tenure packet together for the following year. Her willingness to say no to things that, as she described, did not benefit her, and did not fit into where she was going.

**Cultural Integration.** P1 expressed her admiration for her mentor in helping her to cultivate a sense of trust in herself throughout the tenure process:

She helped me to cultivate a greater sense of trust in myself and to really be unafraid to speak, and to be unafraid to insert my perspective, knowing that I have a valuable perspective that might otherwise be overlooked. . . . She definitely conveyed a sense of like, “I don’t need your approval of me. I know what I’m about. I know what I’m talking about, and you need to listen to me.”

P2 mentioned the importance of having a circle of advisors as a source of help to what needs to be done, as she thought about fully moving up the professorial ladder to full professor. P3 and P4 shared similar experiences with the ways in which racism and sexism permeates the institutional and cultural norms in higher education. P3 shared how
her mentor was empathic to the racism and sexism that she faced, adding, “You need somebody who can look at you and be a mirror for you because sometimes you allow those other people to reflect back who you are and you need somebody who can reflect that to you.” P4 added:

Sometimes we try to fit ourselves in spaces that don’t deserve us and in the state of like, I need a job, I need a job, I need a job, you may be inserting yourself into a space that doesn’t deserve you and it’s going to harm you. . . . Have a plan and don’t let anyone develop a plan for you. Know the lay of the land.

P4 also shared:

I looked to this place for validation and then I learned how stupid that was. . . .

How am I going to look to an oppressive structure that was never designed to have my Black body be a scholar in this space to validate me. And once I let that go . . . if I’m ever rejected at a step or told, “No,” it’s like, “That’s your opinion.”

[I know, who I am.]

Support Networks/Resources. During the interviews, several participants described that support networks/resources helped them to navigate potential and/or actual barriers in academia. Persistence was identified as a significant factor that helped the participants overcome the barriers they faced in academia. One participant described how not having an assigned mentor within her institution to guide her throughout the tenure process, she had to rely on her self-selected mentor to encourage and convince her to set the bar and standard:

I honestly think one of the big issues was that there was no mentorship. It’s uncomfortable to devote your whole life to this thing if you don’t know that
you're doing it right. I think for me, [it was] absolutely persistence. That comes from mentors like this one saying, “just do it. Whatever you’re doing, just convince everybody it’s the right way to do [it].” . . . I think just persisting through all of that unknown.

P6 discussed how her mentor helped her to understand the nuances behind achieving tenure, informing the participant that she needed to have visibility on campus because getting published is not enough. All of the participants felt that having a life-work balance was especially important. The participants added that one of the ways to successfully journey through the tenure process is to have an awareness of how to manage personal life obligations.

**Themes.** Two themes relating to Research Question 4 emerged from the data: human capital and social capital.

**Human Capital.** Education, job credentials, employability, and commitment to the institution emerged from the data as important elements that helped the participants to navigate barriers and achieve tenure.

**Social Capital.** Persistence, emotional support, and encouragement emerged from the data as important aspects that helped the participants to navigate barriers and achieve tenure.

**Summary of Results**

This qualitative, interpretative phenomenological study was designed to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. The focus of the study was on the lived experiences of seven tenured Black women community college professors to gain an
understanding of participants’ definition(s) of mentoring prior to, and after, being mentored, aspects of relational mentoring significant in achieving tenure, outcome measures associated with tenure that are influenced by mentoring relationships, and how mentoring relationships helped to navigate barriers in academia.

This researcher used three cycles of coding to develop categories and themes based on the participants’ responses to interview questions to address and answer the study’s overall research questions. The results of this study resulted in three major findings. The findings provide new perspectives about how Black women in community colleges define mentoring. Further, the findings reveal how the aspects of relational mentoring are significant in achieving tenure.

Chapter 5 provides a brief overview of the research problem, a summary of the study’s major findings, the implications of findings, the limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Using an interpretative, phenomenological approach, this research study was conducted to analyze and understand tenured, Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. Achieving tenure represents success in the academy through which mentoring has been found to be a contributing factor (Diggs et al., 2009; Tillman, 2001, 2018; Zambrana et al., 2015). Mentoring has been identified as a critical element in the career and psychosocial development of women faculty members including Black women faculty members (Dingus, 2008; Grant & Ghee, 2015; Holmes et al., 2007; Kosoko-Lasaki et al., 2006; Meschitti & Smith, 2017; Woolnough & Fielden, 2013). Scholars have noted in the research literature that studies designed to examine mentoring relationships, experiences, access, quality, and opportunities for women of color are limited (Evans & Cokley, 2008; Li et al., 2018; Stanley, 2006; Wilson-Alhstrom et al., 2017). The impetus for this qualitative, interpretative phenomenological study was to analyze and understand perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure by Black women community college professors. The study contributes to the limited scholarly research on Black faculty members’ perspectives in community colleges (Levin et al., 2014). The results of the study answered the following research questions:

1. How do tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring?
2. What relational aspects of mentoring are significant in achieving tenure?

3. How are outcome measures associated with tenure influenced by mentoring relationships?

4. How do mentoring relationships help navigate barriers (potential and/or actual), if any, in academia?

The overarching categories and themes that emerged from the study were discussed in Chapter 4. These categories and themes answered the study’s research questions. The organization and presentation of this study’s categories and themes could help to provide Black women community college professors and institutions with insight on (a) the critical need for mentoring Black women community college professors to address the absence of an operational definition of mentoring, (b) the relational aspects of mentoring that are significant in achieving tenure, (c) the outcome measures associated with tenure that are influenced by mentoring relationships, and (d) how mentoring relationships help Black women community college professors navigate barriers in academia. The results indicate that mentoring the definitions before and after mentoring have similarities that recognize the importance of having a senior faculty member guide, counsel, advise, and encourage the attainment of professional and personal goals of Black women community college faculty. The results further emphasize aspects of relational mentoring, such as fluidity, authenticity, mutuality, which yield growth-fostering relationships, and they are beneficial to Black women community college professors. In addition, the results reveal that Black women community college faculty members face institutional and organizational barriers that can potentially hinder their tenure process.
The results of this study reveal three major findings connected to the research questions. The findings present new perspectives relating to scholarly research on relational mentoring that suggest persistence, intimacy, and connection are vital to professional and career advancement of Black women community college professors. The three major findings are:

1. Mentoring is critical to the professional and career advancement of Black women community college professors and supports interpretations and variations found in the definitions of mentoring.

2. Intimacy and connection are perceived as relational aspects of mentoring that are significant in achieving tenure among Black women community college professors.

3. Persistence is an aspect of mentoring relationships that is influenced by both the mentoring relationships and the instinctive, intrinsic drive that helped the Black women community college professors overcome seemingly insurmountable barriers in academia.

This study has implications for the recruitment and retention of Black women faculty, changes in institutional policy and practice, and the advancement of Black women in academia.

**Implications of Findings**

This research presents implications for Black women junior faculty members by providing the opportunity for college and university leadership to examine, improve, and develop institutional and departmental mentoring programs, faculty support networks, and institutional policies designed to support the recruitment, retention, professional
development, and successful tenure of Black women faculty members. For institutional leaders, this research offers insight into the plight of Black women community college professors as they navigate a strenuous tenure process that supports institutional and organizational norms that are entrenched in systemic racism and sexism. For researchers, this study contributes to the scarce scholarly research on the perspectives of Black women community college professors. This study highlights the need to use the RCT model of mentoring to examine the behaviors and processes found in high-quality relationships of mutuality, learning, growth, inspiration, affirmation, and authenticity (Ragins, 2016). Additionally, this study can be used as a starting point in exploring the persistence of Black women faculty members to gain a deeper understanding of a mentor’s role in faculty members’ persistence in the academy using relational mentoring to examine the extent to which intimacy and connection contribute to aspirations to persist in academia.

**Major Finding 1**

*Mentoring is critical to the professional and career advancement of Black women community college professors and supports interpretations and variations found in the definitions of mentoring.* The findings from this study support the importance of mentoring for Black women professors. The participants in this study validated the research that suggests informal and formal mentoring plays a major role in professional development (Davis, 2010). The research study notes responses from the participants that concur that the identification of the needs of individuals from a holistic perspective is essential in mentoring. Mentoring is absent of an operational definition. This research study used the definition of mentoring asserted by Blackwell (1989) as a process by
which persons of superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégé” (p. 9).

The underrepresentation of Black women faculty members in higher education denotes the need to investigate the “leaky pipeline” phenomenon that underscores the barriers that Black women faculty members experience, thus preventing them from successfully achieving tenure in the academy. The lack of effective mentoring has been attributed to the barriers faced in academia. This finding is connected to research that supports the importance of mentoring. Tillman (2012) noted that Black female scholars benefit from mentors who provide emotional and social support, advice, and career advice. Stanley (2006) noted that faculty of color receive little to no mentoring thus limiting their understanding of the unwritten rules about the tenure and promotion process. Scholarly research indicates that mentorship is significant in the systems of career advancement, development of personal and professional relationships, and support (Alvarez & Lazarri, 2016; Davis et al., 2011c; Jacobi, 1991; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Stanley, 2006).

The findings of this study lend valuable insight into the formation of (a) institutional and departmental mentoring programs, (b) faculty support networks, and (c) institutional policies designed to support the recruitment, retention, professional development, and successful tenure of Black women faculty members.

The findings from this study suggest the need for mentoring in the professional and career advancement of Black women community college professors. Mentoring programs help to contribute to the retention and success of faculty members in academia
Budgetary constraints limit an institution’s ability to invest in the development of new faculty. Davis et al. (2011a) noted that the funding of mentoring initiatives is critical to the “maintenance and viability of institution research goals” (p. 44). Additionally, an institution’s commitment to funding mentoring programs has a direct impact on the retention of faculty, resulting in significant savings in recruitment and staffing resources.

**Major Finding 2**

*Intimacy and connection are perceived as relational aspects of mentoring that are significant in achieving tenure among Black women community college professors.* RCT examines the relational connections that are formed in human interactions (Jordan, 2000; Miller, 1987). Relational mentoring is defined as “an interdependent and generative developmental relationship that promotes mutual growth, learning and development within the career context” (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007, p. 374). Relational mentoring represents relational conditions found in high-quality mentoring (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). Research suggests high-quality mentoring focuses on the relational aspects of trust, disclosure, vulnerability, and commitment (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Ragins, 1997; 2016; Ragins & Kram, 2007). The RCT model of relational mentoring analyzes organizational and cultural contexts based on (a) relational conditions/stance, (b) relational skills, (c) relational behaviors and processes, (d) contextual factors, (e) mentoring episode outcomes, and (f) mentoring relationship outcomes as perceived by the participants (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

This study used Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of relational mentoring to support the relational viewpoints in mentoring relationships that highlight mutuality,
authenticity, intimacy, and connection as elements within the RCT model of mentoring framework that are beneficial for both mentors and protégés. Using the RCT framework, the study’s findings suggest that the relational aspects in mentoring relationships are significant to the successful tenure of Black women community college professors. The research proposed that a Black woman community college professor’s ability to succeed in academia are shaped by the development of reciprocal intimacy in a mentoring relationship. Intimacy, as noted in the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of mentoring is a relationship outcome of the mentoring relationship. Connection, as identified in the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) RCT model of mentoring, is a mentoring episode outcome that is defined as a single of interaction. The study’s findings support the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) study that indicates that one of the key outcomes of growth-fostering interactions is based on mentoring episodes that produce an increased (positive) relational effect. Fletcher and Ragins (2007) further asserted that repeated mentoring episodes result in (positive) relational effects as identified in Miller and Stiver’s (1997) “five good things” as outcomes of growth-fostering interactions.

The study’s findings are consistent with the research study conducted by Jordan and Hartling (2002). Jordan and Hartling (2002) noted that growth results from the individual yearning of humans to be relationally connected with others. The findings from this study imply that Black women community college professors experience reciprocal intimacy and connection with their mentors over time in the mentoring relationship, resulting in a high-quality mentoring relationship. All the participants noted instances where they experienced periods of disconnection with their mentors during the beginning phases of their mentoring relationship, notably during the times when
authenticity was being developed. Growth-in-connection episodes were identified by the relational conditions of mutuality and authenticity as described by the participants. Intimacy, of a nonsexual nature, in mentoring research is described as (a) mutual closeness, (b) affection, (c) trust, (d) respect, (e) commitment, and (f) self-disclosure (Hurley, 1996). Intimacy, seen as taboo in previous literature, is described as “that deep and caring involvement with other human beings, [it’s] an integral part of self-actualization and mental health” (Bennetts, 2002, p. 158). Consequently, this study affirms that the ability of Black women community college professors to adapt to environments that are often seen as unwelcoming and isolating solely depends on the connection and intimate nature of relational mentoring among Black women community college professors. The Craddock (2013) study, exploring relational dynamics among Black women in the academy, noted that levels of intimacy: warmth, comfort, and tension can help researchers to investigate the uniqueness of mentoring relationships and connections with Black women. The bidirectional relationship of growth-in-connection interactions is aligned with the participant responses of displaying elements of being committed to the growth of the mentoring relationship, as noted in the Lobel et al. (1994) study of nonsexual close relationships that describe the four types of support that exist in the workplace:

- Emotional support, which includes behaviors that contribute to another’s well-being, such as nurturing, providing empathy, caring, loving, trusting, listening to problems, and promoting the other’s happiness;
- Instrumental support, which involves directly helping people in need, such as doing their work for them;
- Informational support, which involves providing advice or other information
individuals can use to help themselves cope with problems; and appraisal support, which involves providing feedback about performance or other information individuals can use to evaluate themselves. (p. 10)

The Lobel et al. (1994) research describes elements of the Fletcher and Ragins (2007) model, which were found to be consistent in this study’s findings. The RCT model of the mentoring that underlies aspects of intimacy are significant in relational mentoring among Black women community college professors. Consequently, high-quality mentoring relationships benefit Black women community college professors as they navigate barriers, acculturate to organizational norms, develop support networks, and access resources.

**Major Finding 3**

*Persistence was identified as an aspect of mentoring relationships that was influenced by both the mentoring relationships and the instinctive and intrinsic drive that helped Black women community college professors overcome insurmountable barriers in academia.* The underrepresentation of Black women in higher education signifies the need to investigate the “leaky pipeline” phenomenon that underscores the barriers that Black women faculty members experience, thus preventing them from successfully achieving tenure in the academy. Barriers, such as racism, social isolation, lack of access, lack of success, lack of time to service and teaching, committee involvement, discredited research, and lack of mentoring can hinder the tenure process for Black women and minority faculty members (Aguirre, 2000; Alfred, 2001; Allen et al., 2000a, 2018; Diggs et al., 2009; Edwards & Ross, 2018; Frazier, 2011; Gregory, 1999, 2001; Tillman, 2001). Five of the seven participants described microaggressions, racism, and sexism based on
experiences with other faculty members or students. One participant recounted an experience:

When you get to a place, especially like higher education, where the microaggressions of women [are] intense and even from the students, where sexist and racist ideology come out every single day, you need the support. . . . As much as society sets things up against us [Black women], your support system is going to help you get through that. My support system was absolutely necessary, or I would have given up.

Another participant describes her thoughts after receiving tenure and seeing the number of faculty of color enter academia and leave shortly thereafter:

I felt very invested in creating an opportunity to support faculty and staff of color by creating a space for people to talk about what’s going on, creating an opportunity to give people informal guidance, and to help them navigate the politics of this place. There are many people who still feel marginalized and feel that they experience microaggressions.

Similarly, Edwards et al. (2011) noted mentoring relationships as being critical in the persistence of Black female members in the academy. The participants explicitly expressed the ways in which they persisted in academia to ultimately achieving tenure. Their relationships with their mentors were described as being influential in providing (a) access to resources, (b) access to networks, (c) insight into the unwritten rules in academia, and (d) providing psychosocial support.

This finding aligns with the scholarly research that have suggested that obtaining tenure has been more successful for White faculty members compared to minorities, and
that the tenure process and lack of mentoring pose as barriers for minority faculty
(Abdul-Raheem, 2016; Allen et al., 2000b; Dancy & Brown, 2011; Turner et al., 1999).

Limitations

This section of the study outlines the limitations, which include variables that
could potentially impact the study’s results. The limitations noted in the study are: (a)
demographic representation, (b) interview locations, (c) limited perspectives, and (d)
bias.

Demographic Representation

This research study explored the lived experiences of seven tenured Black women
community college professors in three community colleges within CUNY. The study
focused on a small sample size of seven participants that represented a segment of the
faculty population of full-time Black women faculty members within each of the selected
community colleges. The findings of this study may not represent the lived experiences
of all tenured Black women community college professors as well as the lived
experiences of their untenured Black women community college professorial colleagues
who may offer vastly different perspectives.

Interview Locations

Another limitation was the location of the interview settings. Each face-to-face
interview was held in a quiet and semiprivate setting selected by the participants. Some
interview settings were not free of external distractions.

Limited Perspectives

This research study was based on the perspectives of tenured Black women
community college professors regarding relational mentoring and achieving tenure. Using
CRT’s counter-storytelling, the participants were able to share with the researcher their lived experiences with mentoring in academia. Additionally, the researcher was able to examine the relational aspects found in the described mentoring relationships to suggest that relational aspects in mentoring relationships are essential to the successful tenure of Black women community college professors. The RCT model of mentoring highlights the role of the protégé in the mentoring relationship (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). While this study’s research questions investigated the perspectives of the participants, absent from the study are the perspectives of the mentors.

Bias

The researcher is an untenured Black woman community college professor. As a result, there can be a potential for bias based on the experiences of the researcher. The researcher addressed reflexivity throughout the study by disclosing to the participants her current role and position with the institution. Future research outside of the affiliated institution could reduce future bias and subjectivity.

Recommendations

There are two recommendations for future practice and research on relational mentoring and the achievement of tenure for Black women community college professors. The implementation of (a) institutional and departmental mentoring programs, (b) faculty support networks, and (c) institutional policies designed to support the recruitment, retention, professional development, and successful tenure of Black women faculty members is recommended (Frazier, 2011; Thompson, 2008; Tillman, 2018).
**Recommendation 1**

The research data based on the participants’ responses described the length and formality of the mentoring relationship. The years of the mentoring relationships ranged from 8 to 20 years. The participant responses revealed that the length of the mentoring relationships was essential in the development of the relationships in terms of intimacy and growth. In addition, six out of the seven participants described their mentoring relationships as formal. P1 provided context on the formality of her mentoring relationship:

> The person who I selected as my mentor, in one sense, was a formal mentor at the time, when we came together, because she had a very specific role in terms of helping me and guiding me to completion [doctoral degree], but when I completed and graduated, and we were officially done, formally done, then I kept her and held her as my unofficial, informal mentor.

The findings of this study suggest that institutions should develop and implement formal institutional and departmental mentoring programs using a research-design approach. Davis et al. (2011a) noted that mentoring initiatives support institutional advancement and research goals. Scholarly research findings have indicated that informal and formal mentoring relationships have a significant impact on a Black women faculty member’s professional development, which could assist in overcoming barriers and achieving tenure as they balance the demands and rigor of the academic workplace (Antonio, 2002; Baxley, 2012; Dade et al., 2015; Davis et al., 2011b; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Frazier, 2011; Gregory, 2001; Stanley, 2006; Tillman, 2001, 2018). Institutional mentoring programs must develop a training curriculum for faculty members interested in
becoming mentors. The training curriculum must include diversity, microaggressions, and anti-racist practices. One participant noted:

The difficulties that I think Black women have with getting tenure doesn’t have anything to do with the ability to do the job. It’s those constant, scary, oppressive, stressors of sexism and racism . . . especially in microaggressions. A lot of times, people don’t realize that they’re being microaggressive, but those are the ones that really hurt and undermine your confidence in yourself.

College institutions must make a commitment to designing institutional policies to support the recruitment, retention, professional development, and successful tenure of Black women faculty members. This study’s findings are consistent with the scholarly research that suggests that as institutions develop successful mentoring programs, the number of Black women faculty members in colleges and universities will increase, in addition to the number of tenured Black faculty members (Allen & Joseph, 2018; Irby, 2014; Kelly & McCann, 2014; Tillman, 2018). Davis et al. (2011c) noted in her research the study participant perspectives from the Sisters of the Academy (SOTA) research bootcamp. The SOTA research bootcamp is based on a mentoring model that pairs participants with junior and faculty members to provide a network of psychosocial support, professional development, and coaching. Institutions that invest in mentoring program designed for faculty members, including Black women faculty members, have to demonstrate the commitment to recruiting and retaining faculty members to ensure their success in the academy.
Recommendation 2

Faculty support networks were identified as a theme in this study that examined how mentoring relationships help protégés navigate barriers in academia. The researcher, through an interpretative lens, was able to analyze and understand how critical support networks and resources validate the importance of mentoring relationships. Support emerged as a theme in the study characterized by the mentor’s function and described within the mentoring relationship: dynamics and behaviors. Support was also noted by the participants as they expressed their definition of mentoring, the relational aspects significant in achieving tenure, and how mentoring relationships help to navigate barriers in academia. The participants described that the support networks/resources provided during their mentoring relationship helped them to navigate potential and/or actual barriers in academia. Persistence was identified as a significant factor that helped the participants to overcome the barriers they faced in academia. The findings of this study have implications for future research studies examining the dyadic mentoring relationships among Black women faculty members to explore aspects of psychosocial support, networking, and the professional advancement in relation to achieving tenure. This research study provides the impetus to research the ways in which Black women faculty members persist in academia. Further research is recommended on reexamining the dynamics of psychosocial support and averting the adverse effects of opposition (Cobb-Roberts et al., 2017).

Conclusion

An interpretative, phenomenological, qualitative, and descriptive design was used to analyze and understand tenured Black women community college professors’
perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure. A combination of various coding approaches was used to analyze and cross-analyze the data. The analysis of the data collected from the interview question responses and the MES and MPQ assisted in addressing the research questions connected to the problem statement. In this study, the researcher addressed four research questions relating to analyzing and understanding the perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure based on the lived experiences of Black women community college professors.

1. How do tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring?

2. What relational aspects of mentoring are significant in achieving tenure?

3. How are outcome measures associated with tenure influenced by mentoring relationships?

4. How do mentoring relationships help navigate barriers (potential and/or actual), if any, in academia?

The findings of this study present new information, adding to the scarcity of the research literature on the lived experiences of Black community college faculty members (Levin et al., 2013, 2014; Malcom, 2013). This study found that Black women community college professors displayed aspects of relational mentoring in their informal and formal mentoring relationships in the form of connection and intimacy. These courageous Black women endured the rigorous and complex tenure process in a large public university system. The underrepresentation of Black women faculty members has been attributed to factors and barriers within the academic workplace. Barriers, such as gendered racism, social isolation, unreceptive and alienating campus climates, lack of
access to research opportunities, discredited scholarly research, increased teaching and service committee assignments, and lack of mentoring can hinder the tenure process for Black women and minority faculty members (Aguirre, 2000; Allen et al., 2000a, 2000b; Arnold et al., 2016; Frazier, 2011; Gregory, 1999, 2001; Smith et al., 2006; Tillman, 2001; Wilder et al., 2013). This study’s findings highlight the persistence of Black women community college professors as they experienced misogynoir embedded within the systemic and endemic structures of racism embedded in academia. The researcher used counter-storytelling in CRT to explicitly detail the personal narratives and perspectives of the participants that illustrate sexism, racism, and other barriers faced by Black women in academia (Davis et al., 2011a; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Pittman, 2010; Sulé, 2014). Persistence was identified as a significant aspect of mentoring relationships that was influenced by the mentoring relationships and the instinctive and intrinsic drive that helped Black women overcome insurmountable barriers in academia. Based on the finding of this study, mentoring and networking programs can address and eliminate those barriers and provide support, access, and offer success to Black women community college faculty members, as well as mentoring contributing to the recruitment and retention of minority faculty members.
References


Aguirre, A. (2000). Women and minority faculty in the academic workplace: Recruitment, retention, and academic culture. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports, 27(6), 1-110.


Ragins, B. R. (2016). From the ordinary to the extraordinary: High-quality mentoring relationships at work. *Organizational Dynamics, 45*, 228-244.


Smith, W. A. (2004). Black faculty coping with racial battle fatigue: The campus racial climate in a post-civil rights era. In D. Cleveland (Ed.), *A long way to go: Conversations about race by African American faculty and graduate students* (pp. 171-190). Peter Lang Publishing


Appendix A

Gatekeeper Protocol Form

Black Women Community College Professors’ Perceptions of Relational Mentoring and Achieving Tenure

Date__________________________________________

Name of Gatekeeper_____________________________________

Institution___________________________________________

Location_____________________________________________

Contact Information____________________________________

Researcher___________________________________________

Email Contact_________________________________________

Phone Contact________________________________________

I would like to thank you for agreeing to serve as a potential gatekeeper for my dissertation study. The proposed study is a central component of the dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study is to understand and explore tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring as they reflect on its role in achieving tenure. Relational cultural theory (RCT) is a framework that examines the development of growth-fostering relationships. Growth-fostering relationships are based on factors, such as, mutuality, authenticity, reciprocity, empathy, and connectedness, all which occur within the context of the relationship between the
mentor and mentee. Using counter-storytelling in critical race theory (CRT) and the characteristics of relational cultural theory (RCT), I am interested in seeking prospective research participants from your professional and/or social networks who are over the age of 18, who self-identify as a Black woman with tenure status, currently employed at a 2-year institution within CUNY, and who has had previous exposure to mentoring previous to their tenure.

Your role as a gatekeeper will be to facilitate access between the prospective research participants and the researcher. If you know of any potential participants who may fit the inclusion criteria, please feel free to email me at ___________. I will then forward the letter of invitation to you, along with the informed consent form and my contact information, for you to forward to prospective participants.

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Tameka Battle at ___-___-____ or Dr. Anthony Chiarlitti at ___-___-____. I sincerely thank you for your time and appreciate your assistance in recruiting prospective participants. Thank you.

Best Regards,

Tameka Battle
Appendix B

Letter of Invitation to Research Participants

Dear Mr./Ms. _______________________________ (Research Participant’s Name)

My name is Tameka Battle. I am currently a doctoral student in the Executive Leadership Program at St. John Fisher College – Iona College Extension Site. I am writing to invite you to volunteer to participate in a research study on Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure that I will be conducting for my dissertation. My research topic is **Black Women Community College Professors’ Perceptions of Relational Mentoring and Achieving Tenure**.

The purpose of this qualitative interpretative study is to analyze and understand how tenured Black women community college professors perceive relational mentoring and its role in achieving tenure. You have been referred as a potential research participant by an individual within your institution’s leadership (gatekeeper), who, through multiple social and/or professional networks, has identified you as a potential research participant.

This research is significant because of the paucity of scholarly research on tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring. Research suggests that mentoring lacks an operational definition. Gaining insight into how tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring and perceive relational mentoring and its role in achieving tenure could possibly benefit Black women junior faculty members as they navigate the often-complicated tenure process. Because
of your experience with mentoring relationships, and your status as a tenured Black woman community college professor, I am interested in conducting a face-to-face interview with you, at an on-campus location of your choice or a mutually agreed upon site. The interview would be scheduled for no more than an hour and a half. With your informed consent, the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by a transcription service following the interview. The interview will explore your perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure based on the following research questions:

1. How do tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring?
2. What relational aspects of mentoring are significant in achieving tenure?
3. How are outcome measures associated with tenure influenced by mentoring relationships?
4. How do mentoring relationships help navigate barriers (potential and/or actual), if any, in academia?

All digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer, which will be stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files will include assigned unique identity codes and pseudonyms. The files will not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect the participants to this study. Other materials, including field notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, will be stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a fire and theft-proof safe in the private home of the principal researcher. Only the researcher will have access to electronic and/or paper records. The digitally recorded
audio data will be kept by the researcher for a period of five years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for five years after publication. At the time of destruction, all paper records will be cross-cut shredded by a professional shredding company. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data will not be possible.

After the interview is transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript from our interview. A copy of the transcript will be provided upon request. I anticipate the potential time commitment for this research study, over a 6-month period, will be between 3 to 4 hours. Your name and your current institution will not be used in the transcript or in the research report. I would also appreciate, from your social networks, your assistance in possibly identifying potential research participants that meet the inclusion criteria. It is my hope that this study will contribute to the body of scholarly research literature on exploring the phenomenon of underrepresentation and relational mentoring based on the lived experiences of Black women community college professors, which could ultimately lend insight into how they navigate and advance through academia.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please let me know by return email. I will contact you to review the consent form, which I have attached to this email correspondence, and to select a date, time, and place for the interview that is convenient for you. For your convenience, my contact information is included at the end of this letter. I would appreciate your response by January 13, 2020.
If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Tameka Battle at ___-___-____ or Dr. Anthony Chiarlitti at ___-____-____. I sincerely thank you for your time and hope you will consider participating in this study.

Tameka Battle
Appendix C

Informed Written Consent Form

CUNY HRPP Guidance: Suggested Language for Informed Consent Documents

INSTRUCTION: Please refer to CUNY HRPP Guidance: Suggested Language for Informed Consent Documents for specific language suggestions. Information provided throughout this form must be presented in sufficient detail relating to the research, and must be organized and presented in a way that does not merely provide lists of isolated facts, but rather facilities the prospective subject’s understanding of the reasons why one might or might not want to participate.

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
City University of New York, LaGuardia Community College
Health Sciences Department

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Research Study: Black Women Community College Professors’ Perceptions of Relational Mentoring and Achieving Tenure

Principal Investigator: Tameka S. Battle, MA,
Associate Professor/ Program Director, Health Sciences Department

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Anthony Chiarlitti, Dissertation Committee, Chair Visiting Assistant Professor, Doctor of Education in Executive Leadership, St. John Fisher College- Iona College Extension Site at __________

Dr. W. Jeff Wallis, Faculty Advisor, Doctor of Education in Executive Leadership, St. John Fisher College-Iona College Extension Site at ______

Research Sponsor:

You are being asked to participate in a research study on the perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure by Black women community college faculty members. This study is being conducted with participants employed at three City University of New York (CUNY) community colleges at a mutually agreed upon site. This study is being conducted by Tameka S. Battle, doctoral student in the Executive Leadership Program at St. John Fisher College- Iona College Extension Site. The faculty research mentor is Dr. Anthony Chiarlitti, Visiting Professor in the Executive Leadership Program at St. John Fisher College. You are being asked to participate in a research study because you have been referred as a potential research participant by an individual within your institution’s leadership (gatekeeper), who, through multiple social and/or professional networks, have identified you as a potential research participant.
Purpose:

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenology study is to understand and explore tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure.

Key Information:

- As with all research studies, participation is voluntary. The Principal Investigator is seeking your consent to participate in the research study.
- Approximately 5-7 people will take part in this study. The results will be used for a doctoral dissertation and to contribute to the body of scholarly research on the lived experiences of Black women community college professors on their perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure.
- If you agree to take part in this study, you will be involved in this study for no longer than 90 minutes, during the semi-structured face-to-face interviews, based on participant’s availability in the months of January and February 2020, at a location of their choice. The researcher will follow-up with the participants, within 30 days, after transcription of the interviews are completed for the purposes of respondent validation and to explore the credibility of results.
- Participants who participate in this study will be asked to complete a Mentorship Profile Questionnaire (MPQ)© and Mentorship Effectiveness Scale (MES)© as a guide to facilitate open-ended questions on descriptions on mentoring relationships. The MPQ describes the characteristics and outcome measures of the mentoring relationship from the perspective of the mentee. The MES is a 12-item Likert-type rating scale, which evaluates 12 behavioral characteristics of the mentor (Berk, Berg, Mortimer, Walton-Moss, and Yeo (2005). Both instruments will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participants will be provided with any additional information in the consent form.
- We believe this study has no more minimal risk. Fifteen minutes will be required during the semi-structured, face-to-face interviews to complete the Mentorship Profile Questionnaire (MPQ)© and Mentorship Effectiveness Scale (MES)©.
- You may not directly benefit from this research; however, we hope that your participation in this study may contribute to the paucity of scholarly research on tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring.

Disclosure of Financial Interests: [Not Applicable]

Procedures:

If you volunteer to participate in this research study, we will ask you to do the following:

- Complete the Mentorship Profile Questionnaire (MPQ)© and Mentorship Effectiveness Scale (MES)©. The MPQ describes the characteristics and outcome measures of the mentoring relationship from the perspective of the mentee. The MES is a 12-item Likert-type rating scale, which evaluates 12 behavioral characteristics of the mentor. Both instruments will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.
- Participate in semi-structured face-to-face interviews, no longer than 90 minutes, based on participant’s availability in the months of January and February 2020, at a mutually agreed upon site.
- With your written consent, the interview will be digitally audio recorded. The audio recordings will be transcribed by the researcher and/or by a transcription service. You can opt out of the recording and still participate in the study. The researcher will accommodate requests from participants who do not consent to audio recording by offering participants a choice of having data collected via written transcription by the researcher as a means of data collection.
• Participate in a follow-up meeting, in-person or telephone, within 30 days, after transcription of the interviews are completed for the purposes of respondent validation and to explore the credibility of results.
• As a participant in this study, you have a right to request receipt of a copy of the summary of findings from this study, upon completion of the dissertation.
• As a participant, a pseudonym will be used in place of your full name. The institution where you are employed will be generally described by type, size, geographical location, with a pseudonym used in place of the name. The only exception to maintaining confidentiality would be if you indicate that there is immediate and serious danger to the health or physical safety of yourself or others. In that case, a professional may be contacted. This will be discussed in detail when reviewing the informed consent form.

Audio Recording/Video Recording/Photographs:

• Procedure A: With participants’ informed consent, the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by a transcription service following the interview. Interview questions will provide a coherent connection between the study’s interview questions, research questions, and conceptual framework. An interview protocol will be used for the recording and inquiry of questions during the interview process and to ensure participant confidentiality.

• To ensure accuracy of our findings, Procedure A will be audio recorded for later transcription and review by the researcher. You can opt out of the recording and still participate in the study. The researcher will accommodate requests from participants who do not consent to audio recording by offering participants a choice of having data collected via written transcription by the researcher as a means of data collection.

Time Commitment:

Your participation in this research study is expected to last for a total of approximately 2 ½ hours. With written consent, will participants in a semi-structured face-to-face interview, no longer than 90 minutes, based on the participant’s availability in the months of January and February 2020, at a mutually agreed upon site that will be digitally audio recorded. The audio recording will be transcribed by the researcher and/or by a transcription service. Participants will be provided with an opportunity to opt out of the recording and still participate in the study. The researcher will accommodate requests from participants who do not consent to audio recording by offering participants a choice of having data collected via written transcription by the researcher, as a means of data collection. The researcher will follow-up with the participants, within 30 days, after transcription of the interviews are completed for the purposes of respondent validation and to explore the credibility of results. Participants have a right to request receipt of a copy of the summary of findings from this study, upon completion of the dissertation.

Potential Risks or Discomforts:

We believe this study has no more than a minimal risk. The records of this study will be kept private and participants’ confidentiality will be protected. In any sort of report the researcher(s) might publish, no identifying information will be included. The only exception to maintaining confidentiality would be if participants indicate that there is immediate and serious danger to the health or physical safety of themselves or others. In that case, a professional may be contacted. This will be discussed with participants in detail when reviewing the informed consent form.


**Potential Benefits:**

You may not directly benefit from this research; however, we hope that your participation in this study may contribute to the paucity of scholarly research on tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring.

**Alternatives to Participation:** [Not Applicable]

**Costs:** [Not Applicable]

**Payment for Participation:**

You **WILL NOT** receive compensation/incentive for participating in this research study.

**Research Related Injury:** [Not Applicable]

**New Information:**

You will be notified about any new information regarding this study that may affect your willingness to participate in a timely manner.

**Confidentiality:**

We will make our best efforts to maintain confidentiality of any information that is collected during this research study, and that can identify you. We will disclose this information only with your permission or as required by law.

We will protect your confidentiality by keeping the records of this study private. In any sort of report the researcher(s) might publish, no identifying information will be included. The only exception to maintaining confidentiality would be if you indicate that there is immediate and serious danger to the health or physical safety of yourself or others. In that case, a professional may be contacted. This will be discussed in detail when reviewing the informed consent form.

Identifiable research records will be stored securely and only the researcher(s) will have access to the records. All data will be kept in a locked fire and theft-proof safe in the private home and office of the principal investigator and on a password-protected computer stored securely in the principal investigator’s private home by the investigator(s). All study records with identifiable information, including approved IRB documents, tapes, transcripts, and consent forms, will be destroyed by shredding and/or deleting after three years.

Only the researcher will have access to electronic and/or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data will be kept by the principal investigator for a period of three years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for three years after publication. All paper records will be cross-cut shredded by a professional shredding company. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data is not possible.

The data collected in this study as well as the results of the research can be used for scientific purposes and may be published in ways that will not reveal participants’ identity. An anonymized version of the data from this study may be publicly accessible, for example via the Open Science Framework (osf.io), without additional written consent. The anonymized data can be used for re-analysis, but also for additional analyses, by the same or other researchers. The anonymized data will
be stored in a created database for future use with participants’ consent. The purpose and scope of this secondary use is not foreseeable. Any personal information that could directly identify an individual will be removed from the data and results are made public. Personal information will be protected closely so no one will be able to connect individual responses and any other information collected about an individual will be stored separately from all other data.

The research team, authorized CUNY staff, and government agencies that oversee this type of research may have access to research data and records in order to monitor the research. Research records provided to authorized, non-CUNY individuals will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

**Participants’ Rights:**

Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and requires your informed consent. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. John Fisher College or City University of New York (CUNY). Your participation or nonparticipation in this study will in no way affect your employment within CUNY. If you decide to participate, you are free to skip any question that is asked. You may also withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

**Questions, Comments or Concerns:**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the following researchers:

- **Tameka S. Battle, Principal Investigator at**

- **Dr. Anthony Chiarlitti, Dissertation Committee, Chair Visiting Assistant Professor, Doctor of Education in Executive Leadership, St. John Fisher College- Iona College Extension Site at**

- **Dr. W. Jeff Wallis, Faculty Advisor, Doctor of Education in Executive Leadership, St. John Fisher College-Iona College Extension Site at**

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have comments or concerns that you would like to discuss with someone other than the researchers, please call the CUNY Research Compliance Administrator at 646-664-8918 or email HRPP@cuny.edu. Alternatively, you may write to:

CUNY Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research
Attn: Research Compliance Administrator
205 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

**Participant Signature for Audio Recording**

If you agree to audio recording, please indicate this below.

_____ I agree to audio recording.

_____ I do NOT agree to audio recording.
**Signature of Participant:**

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

_____________________________________________________
Signature of Participant  ______________________
Date

**Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent**

_____________________________________________________
Printed Name of Individual Obtaining Consent

_____________________________________________________
Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent  ______________________
Date

**Participant Signature for Anonymized Data Storage**

If you agree to anonymized data storage for future research, please indicate this below.

_____ I agree to anonymized data storage.

_____ I do NOT agree to anonymized data storage.
Appendix D

Interview Questions

Can you give me a little background information about your career as a faculty member?

How did you get into academia?

a. How many years have you been at (Pseudonym name of institution)?

b. What position do you currently hold? Past positions?

c. What year did you receive tenure?

d. How many years is the tenure process at your institution?

1. In your own words, how would you define mentoring prior to, and after, being mentored?

2. How would you describe your relationship with your mentor?

3. Would you consider your mentoring relationship as formal or informal? Why?

4. On your Mentorship Profile Questionnaire (MPQ), you indicated the role of your mentor as……teacher, counselor, advisor, sponsor, advocate, resource, can you describe that role?

5. Other than what you indicated on the MPQ and based on your work-life balance; do you feel the amount of time you spent communicating with your mentor was enough?
6. Based on your response to the length of time you had this relationship, are there any aspects of the relationship, such as role of the mentor, that have changed over time?

7. Can you elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of your relationship? If you could change anything, what would it be?

8. Which outcome measure do you feel had the greatest influence on you achieving tenure? Why?

9. Which outcome measure do you feel had the least influence on your achieving tenure? Why?

10. How would you describe your mentor’s influence on your achieving tenure?

11. Is there any additional information you would like to share regarding your relationship with your mentor and achieving tenure?

Research suggests that Black women faculty face barriers (social, institutional, cultural, etc.)

12. Can you describe any barriers you experienced and aspects of your mentoring relationship that helped to address the barrier, or any other barriers not mentioned, if any? Are there any additional barriers you have experienced that was not mentioned?

13. Any advice you would offer to junior faculty?

14. Any recommendations you would offer to institutions with respect to mentoring programs?
Lastly, are there any tenured Black women community college faculty you could recommend from your social and/or professional networks to be potential participants in this research?
Appendix E

Mentorship Profile Questionnaire (MPQ)

Your name:__________________________________________________________

Mentor’s name:_____________________________________________________

Part I: Description of Relationship

1. What was the role of your mentor?____________________________________
   (e.g., teacher, counselor, advisor, sponsor, advocate, resource)

2. How often did you communicate?____________________________________
   (e.g., e-mail, in person, telephone)

3. How long have you had this relationship?_____________________________

4. How would you characterize the strengths and weaknesses of your relationship?_____

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________
Part II: Outcome Measures

**Directions:** Please check all of the following that resulted from your interaction with your mentor and specify or describe below. As appropriate, supporting documents may be attached.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Presentation or poster</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>New teaching method or strategy</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Clinical expertise</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Conducting research</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Service activities (e.g., community service, political activity, professional organization)</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Development of a program (e.g., educational/clinical course or new program of study)</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Job change/promotion</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Grant writing/submission</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Other</td>
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(Revised: 11/21/02 Reformatted: 10/30/05)
Appendix F
Mentorship Effectiveness Scale

Your name: ______________________________

Directions: The purpose of this scale is to evaluate the mentoring characteristics of:

who has identified you as an individual with whom he/she has had a professional, mentor/mentee relationship. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement listed below. Circle the letter or letters that correspond to your response. Your responses will be kept confidential.

SD = Strongly Disagree
D  = Disagree
SLD = Slightly Disagree
SLA = Slightly Agree
A  = Agree
S  = Strongly Agree
N  = Not Applicable

SAMPLE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My mentor was hilarious.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SLD</th>
<th>SLA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>[NA]</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. My mentor was accessible.</td>
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<td>2. My mentor demonstrated professional integrity.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My mentor demonstrated content expertise.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SLD</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>My mentor was approachable.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>My mentor was supportive and encouraging.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My mentor provided constructive and useful critiques of my work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>My mentor motivated me to improve my work product.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>My mentor was helpful in providing direction and guidance on professional issues (e.g., networking).</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>My mentor answered my questions satisfactorily (e.g., timely response, clear, comprehensive).</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>My mentor acknowledged my contributions appropriately (e.g., committee contributions, awards).</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>My mentor suggested appropriate resources (e.g., experts, electronic contacts, source materials).</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>My mentor challenged me to extend my abilities (e.g., risk taking, try a new professional activity, draft a section of an article).</td>
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Please make additional comments on the back of this sheet.

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Appendix G

Interview Protocol Form

Black Women Community College Professors’ perceptions of Relational Mentoring and Achieving Tenure

Date: ________________________________

Start time: ________________________________

End time: ________________________________

Location: ________________________________

Interviewer: ________________________________

Interviewee: ________________________________

Release form signed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview for my dissertation study. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study is to understand and explore tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring as they reflect on its role in achieving tenure. Relational cultural theory (RCT) is a framework that examines the development of growth-fostering relationships. Growth-fostering relationships are based on factors, such as mutuality, authenticity, reciprocity, empathy, and connectedness, all which occur within the context of the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Using counter-storytelling in critical race theory (CRT) and the characteristics of relational cultural theory (RCT), I am
interested in understanding your definition of mentoring and your perceptions of relational mentoring and achieving tenure based on the following research questions:

a. How do tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring?

b. What relational aspects of mentoring are significant in achieving tenure?

c. How are outcome measures associated with tenure influenced by mentoring relationships?

d. How do mentoring relationships help navigate barriers (potential and/or actual), if any, in academia?

Because of the lack of scholarly research on tenured Black women community college professors’ perceptions of relational mentoring, I am seeking to gain insight into how tenured Black women community college professors define mentoring and its role in achieving tenure. The information you provide will not only be insightful, but it is my hope that it will contribute to the body of scholarly research literature on exploring the phenomenon of underrepresentation and relational mentoring based on the lived experiences of Black women community college professors, which will ultimately lend insight into how they navigate and advance through academia.

As I previously mentioned and stated in the written informed consent form, your name and your current institution will not be used in the transcript or in the research report. This interview is expected to last for approximately 90 minutes. If at any time you wish to not respond to a question or wish to terminate the interview, please let me know. Before we begin, do you have any objections to this interview being audio recorded? Do you have any questions before we begin? Research from various
disciplines, including academia, suggest mentoring lacks an operational definition. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I use Dr. James E. Blackwell’s (1989) definition of mentoring described as, “a process by which persons of superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégé.”

Can you give me a little background information about your career as a faculty member? How did you get into academia?

a. How many years have you been at (Pseudonym name of institution)?

b. What position do you currently hold? Past positions?

c. What year did you receive tenure?

d. How many years is the tenure process at your institution?

1. In your own words, how would you define mentoring prior to, and after, being mentored?

2. How would you describe your relationship with your mentor?

3. Would you consider your mentoring relationship as formal or informal? Why?

4. On your Mentorship Profile Questionnaire (MPQ), you indicated the role of your mentor as……teacher, counselor, advisor, sponsor, advocate, resource, can you describe that role?

5. Other than what you indicated on the MPQ and based on your work-life balance; do you feel the amount of time you spent communicating with your mentor was enough?

6. Based on your response to the length of time you had this relationship, are there any aspects of the relationship, such as role of the mentor, that have changed over time?
7. Can you elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of your relationship? If you could change anything, what would it be?

8. Which outcome measure do you feel had the greatest influence on you achieving tenure? Why?

9. Which outcome measure do you feel had the least influence on your achieving tenure? Why?

10. How would you describe your mentor’s influence on your achieving tenure?

11. Is there any additional information you would like to share regarding your relationship with your mentor and achieving tenure?

Research suggests that Black women faculty face barriers (social, institutional, cultural, etc.)

12. Can you describe any barriers you experienced and aspects of your mentoring relationship that helped to address the barrier, or any other barriers not mentioned, if any? Are there any additional barriers you have experienced that was not mentioned?

13. Any advice you would offer to junior faculty?

14. Any recommendations you would offer to institutions with respect to mentoring programs?

Lastly, are there any tenured Black women community college faculty you could recommend from your social and/or professional networks to be potential participants in this research?