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"You Can Laugh And Let Your Hair Down In This Space": A Qualitative Multiple Case Study Investigation Of The Creation Of Homeplace Between Black Adolescent Girls And Black Women School Counselors

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“YOU CAN LAUGH AND LET YOUR HAIR DOWN IN THIS SPACE”: A QUALITATIVE MULTIPLE CASE STUDY INVESTIGATION OF THE CREATION OF HOMEPLACE BETWEEN BLACK ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BLACK WOMEN SCHOOL COUNSELORS

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my village and to all the Black women who have created Homeplaces with one another across time.

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the creation of Homeplace between Black women who recently graduated from high school and their former high school counselors who were also Black women. Additionally, this study strove to examine the perceived benefits of experiencing Homeplace in the relationship with their former school counselor for the Black women who recently graduated high school. Homeplace is an environment created by Black women where they can resist oppressive systems, affirm one another, and experience wholeness together (hooks, 1990). Womanism was utilized as the theoretical framework for this study and served as the lens through which the data was analyzed. Major elements of Womanism, including boldness, love, connection, and collective care were considered throughout this process (Walker, 1983). Data analysis revealed four themes: Shared Identities and Experiences, Addressing the Hidden Curriculum, Collective Care and Freedom in Relationship. These findings were explored through a Womanist theoretical framework. In the final chapter of this study, the researcher discussed several implications for school counseling and counselor education and recommendations for future research that were informed by the findings of this study.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Black girls can achieve their desired goals and aspirations. Still, master narratives, defined as ideological scripts that assign power and distribute value within society (Haynes et al., 2016) view Black girls from a deficit-focused lens and permeates educational research. This one-dimensional narrative dominates the body of research focused on Black girls, limiting scholars' and practitioners' access to Black girls' gifts, talents and all they have to offer themselves, one another, and the world. The beauty of Black girls lies in their ability to love themselves and to express love to one another despite the negative messages that are often communicated to them about their worth and value in schools. For generations, Black women have intentionally constructed collective healing spaces, or Homeplaces (hooks, 1990), where collective care and love are centered and where they can resist the clamors of living in a society that is what Black feminist writer and scholar bell hooks (2013) refers to as an "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (p. 40). Though American public schools have been described as sites of Black suffering (Dumas, 2014) for Black children and families, these educational spaces are not untouched by collective care and love. Schools also can serve as sites of resistance for Black students, where Black students and Black educators collectively facilitate love and healing so that Black students can learn freely and experience protection from systemic harm (Griffin et al., 2024; Kelly, 2020; McArthur & Lane, 2019; Mims et al., 2022). School counselors are integral members of school leadership teams who are certified to provide social-emotional, behavioral, and academic support services to students (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2023). Given their professional qualifications, shared intersectional identities with Black

adolescent girls and the precedents of the redemptive power of Homeplaces set by Black women throughout history, Black women school counselors are uniquely positioned within schools to uplift Black girls and to co-construct Homeplaces alongside them so that Black girls can access the social and cultural benefits of collective care in schools. Thus, this study will focus on the inherent strengths of Black girls and Black women school counselors, and the relationships between both groups.

First, it is necessary to unpack the history of educating Black students in America—a history that is undeniably riddled with racism and discrimination. Seaton et al. (2008) suggest that 87% of Black youth experienced at least one discriminatory incident within a given school year. Racism is a system of oppression and advantage based on race, and it is composed of beliefs in racial inferiority and superiority enacted through structures, institutions, and individuals within a society (Sue et al., 2008; Tatum, 2021). The notion of racism can take several forms. Racism can be expressed overtly or covertly through words and behaviors by a perpetrator who holds more racial power (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967).

In school settings, racism may manifest covertly through policies and practices that perpetuate racial inequality, or overtly through direct messaging like microaggressions or racial slurs (Chapman et al., 2013; Kohli et al., 2017). For example, trends in school data highlight discrepancies in the frequency as well as the type of discipline that Black girls experience in schools. Black girls are twice as likely as their white counterparts to be suspended from school and to receive harsh, punitive discipline for minor infractions such as cell phone usage or dress code violations (Morris, 2016). Black girls also endure objectification through biased dress code policies, having their voices and aspirations silenced by teachers, counselors, and administrators, and being forced into stereotypical expectations of promiscuity (e.g. dress code policies that

disproportionately affect Black girls) and aggression all before they can define themselves for themselves (Gadson & Lewis, 2022). Academically, indicators of racism may include the underrepresentation of Black students in advanced level courses, Black students' academic giftedness being met with suspicion, and disparities reflected in disciplinary data (Francis et al., 2019; Morris, 2016; Wun, 2016).

Statistics about the disparities in the school experiences of Black adolescent girls may be startling; however, it is the responsibility of researchers and practitioners to look beyond these numbers to unpack the true stories of Black girls and to document a more holistic account of their experiences in schools. Black girls may not be limited by others' inability to see their worth and value, as they can adopt strategies to resist oppression. Many discover their paths toward thriving socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and academically despite the conditions of their school environments. Indeed, Goodkind et al. (2020) suggest, "Black girls in the U.S. experience high levels of discrimination and adversity and adopt a range of strategies to survive their trauma and maintain their well-being in oppressive systems" (p. 317). In other words, Black girls utilize resistance as a primary tool in their oppression "survival kit." Unlike resilience, which is often used in psychological literature to describe individual peoples' abilities to overcome hardship, the term resistance emphasizes how this action is achieved collectively, alongside other people (French et al., 2013). Black girls' resistance strategies can take many forms ranging from ignoring mistreatment to speaking out against injustice (Goodkind et al., 2020; Morris, 2016). Still, when their resistance strategies take the form of examples like the latter, Black girls are often met with punishment instead of recognition of their non-conformity as a tool of resistance (Goodkind et al., 2020; Morris, 2016).

On the other hand, several positive outcomes have been associated with Black youth developing resistance strategies. Black youth's use of resistance strategies can be a healthy response to trauma resulting from one's experiences of intersectional forms of social oppression and promote Black youth's individual and collective healing (Ginwright, 2006). Furthermore, the development of resistance strategies can promote Black youth's positive racial identity development (Ginwright, 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2022). A strong sense of racial identity, or one's personal significance associated with belonging to a racial group (Tatum, 1997), is associated with positive mental health and academic outcomes for Black youth (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). In contrast to findings highlighting the positive outcomes of resistance, other studies have found that the resistance expressed by Black girls can result in adverse health impacts (Goodkind et al., 2020; Hamblin, 2017; Harrison, 2013). The outcome of these adverse health impacts could leave Black girls to face a double bind: grappling with the reality that the choice to demonstrate resistance could have negative implications for their overall health, and when Black girls resist oppressive systems, they are often labeled delinquent and may face disciplinary action in schools (Goodkind et al., 2020; Morris, 2016). This conundrum may leave Black girls unsure of how they should respond in the presence of racial and social injustice. Despite the possibility of such negative outcomes, it is critical for scholars and educators to remember the positive outcomes of resistance, especially when this data is not always centered in research or in practice. Learning to resist can encourage Black girls to become more critically conscious so they can interrogate and analyze the oppressive systems around them (Goodkind et al., 2020). Developing resistance strategies can help Black girls cope with racism by challenging stereotypical narratives about themselves, developing sisterhood with peers and adults, and mitigating negative mental health outcomes (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022).

The presence of certain protective factors may further support Black youth's positive development amid oppression. Protective factors refer to the resources and support that are available to young people to promote well-being when faced with challenges (Resnick, 2000). Racial socialization may be a protective factor for Black girls. Racial socialization refers to "exposure to cultural practices and objects, efforts to instill pride in and knowledge about African Americans, discussions about discrimination and how to cope with it, and strategies for succeeding in mainstream society" (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 748). Racial socialization can have a favorable impact on Black youth's overall well-being as well as their academic outcomes (Jones & Neblett, 2017). Likewise, a positive sense of racial identity may support Black youth who experience racism and discrimination at school. Racial identity refers to the centrality of one's racial group membership to one's personal sense of self (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018). Racial identity has been linked to positive beliefs about one's racial group, a high sense of self-esteem, and may serve as a moderator for race-related stress (Jones & Neblett, 2017). Racial socialization and racial identity are important to this study because each concept is developed collectively, in community with other Black people. Thus, exploring collectivism is an important part of understanding how racial socialization and racial identity can be protective factors for Black girls, as well as understanding how school personnel (i.e., school counselors) can be involved in these processes for Black girls. Carson (2009) defined collectivism as an "individual's sense of connection to and responsibility for members of their group" (p. 327). Collectivism is a key characteristic of racial socialization and racial identity, because racial socialization occurs in relationship with other Black people (Hughes et al., 2006). Consequently, collectivism can impact how Black students experience racial identity development and racial socialization in school by shaping how they develop relationships with Black peers and school personnel

(Banwo, 2023; Carson, 2009). Furthermore, a strong sense of racial identity may in turn impact a client's (or student in school settings) preference for a Black counselor, given how salient their Blackness is to their identity (Steinfeldt et al., 2020; Townes et al., 2009). These findings may support the importance of Black women school counselors and the safe spaces they can create for Black adolescent girls.

The relationship between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors may serve as a protective factor for Black girls as Homeplace is collectively created amongst them (Bennefied & Jackson, 2022). Briefly defined, Homeplace refers to the environment created by Black women to empower and uplift one another as they resist systems of oppression (hooks, 1990). Homeplace developed within the relationship between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors may promote the development of racial socialization and racial identity, which have already been determined to be protective factors for Black youth (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999). Recent studies highlight the commonality between the experiences of Black girls and Black women mental health professionals in schools (Parker et al., 2022) and may support the valuable role that Black women school counselors can play in co-constructing Homeplaces with Black girls to resist oppression and be affirmed. Specifically, Black women school counselors may be able to relate to the challenges that Black adolescent girls experience at school. Additionally, Goode-Cross and Grim (2016) suggest Black counselors may be able to incorporate racial socialization messages into their work with Black clients that may help protect them from the negative impacts of racism.

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted using a Womanist theoretical framework. The term Womanism was coined by Alice Walker in 1984 in her text *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens.* Womanism

addressed the limitations of feminism by centering the social and political experiences and perspectives of Black women in the middle and late 20th century. Womanist scholars seek to challenge oppressive systems through critically valuing the contributions and plight of Black women as well as their will to confront injustice while also caring for one another by any means necessary. Canon (1995) viewed Womanism as "a critical methodological framework for challenging inherited traditions for their collusion with androcentric patriarchy, as well as a catalyst in overcoming oppressive situations through revolutionary acts of rebellion" (p. 2). This framework guided the development of this study's research questions and the data collection and analysis processes. Specifically, the researcher engaged with fundamental Womanist readings to become familiar with the theory before integrating it within the current study (e.g., *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* by Alice Walker). Additionally, during the data analysis process, the researcher identified a priori codes that were grounded in Womanism and referenced its core tenets as themes emerged out of the data.

Purpose of this Study

Although studies have investigated the experiences of Black girls in schools, the researcher is unaware of any studies that have critically examined the impact of having a Black woman as a school counselor among Black adolescent girls. Examining the relationship between Black women school counselors and Black adolescent girls is important, as adolescence represents a developmental period when youth experience a variety of challenges due to cognitive and social developmental changes occurring within their bodies during this period. These changes can raise identity related questions and increase their awareness of social stressors (Erikson, 1968; Anderson et al., 2018). The current literature often focuses on Black girls' experiences in schools from a deficit perspective while this study will utilize a Womanist

theoretical framework to explore the creation of Homeplace between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors from a strengths-focused lens.

This qualitative case study will explore the experiences of Black adolescent women who recently graduated from high school and who had positive relationships with Black women school counselors. The researcher chose to conduct a qualitative research study for several reasons. Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative research also amplifies the voices of individuals from understudied groups through data collection and analysis that centers their lived experiences as they are recounted by participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, few qualitative studies have explored the experiences of Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors in schools utilizing a Womanist lens. This study will strive to contribute to the work of decolonizing school counseling and counselor education research by recognizing the effectiveness of Womanism as a theoretical framework and Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors as important foci in research.

This study will attempt to understand the essence of these relationships by exploring what it is about these pairings that made them unique and how Homeplace was created within the relationship. Again, Homeplace refers to the environment created by Black women that allows them to experience wholeness and resist oppressive systems together (hooks, 1990). This study will strive to build upon research that has previously been conducted on the experiences of Black girls in schools by utilizing a Womanist theoretical framework to guide the research process. This study will fill this gap by gathering data from both Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors, whereas previous studies have typically focused on only one of these groups (Harris et al., 2017; Holcomb-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2001; Parker et al., 2022; Wines et al.,

2015). To date, Womanism is a framework that has not been integrated in published school counseling research, and this study will be the first to explore this topic through the theoretical lens of Womanism. Womanism is the ideal theoretical framework for this study because of its focus on the strengths of Black women. Womanism also recognizes Black women's abilities to love themselves and others as a means to survival and self-discovery (Walker, 1983).

Significance of Study

This study aims to fill three major gaps in the school counseling literature. First, few school counseling studies have focused on the experiences of Black adolescent girls in relation to their experiences with Black women counselors. The majority of studies in this genre of literature have focused exclusively on the school counseling experiences and perspectives of Black adolescent girls (Harris et al., 2017; Holcomb-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2001; Mayes & Hines, 2014; Mayes et al., 2021; Mayes & Vega, 2022). For example, Holcomb-McCoy and Moore-Thomas (2001) were among the first scholars to explore Black girls' social, emotional, behavioral, and academic perspectives through school counseling research. Their study highlighted the growing numbers of Black adolescent girls who had experienced depression, developmental tasks occurring during adolescence and negative societal portrayals of Black womanhood as reasons Black adolescent girls are prime candidates for counseling in schools (Holcomb-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2001). Additionally, Harris et al. (2017) explored how school counselors can meet the needs of Black girls using a servant leadership framework. Their study found that servant leadership traits (e.g., placing students' needs before school leaders' needs) may help school counselors provide more equitable support for Black adolescent girls by empowering and partnering with them to meet their needs (Harris et al., 2017). Most recently Mayes et al. (2021) examined the experiences of Black girls with school counselors and found

Black girls mostly engaged with school counselors for academic support and did not have their emotional needs met by them. These studies have significantly contributed to this body of research and paved the way for a study of this kind that focuses on the relationships between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. However, unlike previous studies, this study will not just focus on Black adolescent girls as the targeted population and will introduce the perspectives of Black women school counselors to further explore the experiences of Black adolescent girls who have access to Black women school counselors.

Second, there is a paucity of research that focuses on the perspectives and experiences of Black women school counselors. As of today, only one school counseling study has focused exclusively and intentionally on Black women school counselors (Wells & Archibald, 2023). Wells and Archibald (2023) conducted a phenomenological study focusing on Black women who identified as secondary school counselors and their experiences with self-care. Relevant to the current study, the researchers described how the need for Black women school counselors to engage in self-care was due in part to the responsibility and sensitivity they felt to care for Black students. Wells and Archibald did not expand upon the relationship between Black girls and Black school counselors specifically. Thus, more research is needed to understand the relationship between Black girls and Black women school counselors. Parker et al. (2022) examined the experiences of Black women school counselors and psychologists, with key findings highlighting the participants' experiences of discrimination in the workplace. Relevant to the current study, Parker and colleagues also found that participants, including school counselors, discussed their passion for supporting Black K-12 students and serving as a safe space for Black students due to their shared identity. Still, because their study included Black school counselors and school psychologists, Parker and colleagues did not underscore nuanced

differences that are most relevant to each profession. Furthermore, Parker and colleagues did not focus on the specific experiences of Black girls, in conjunction with Black women school counselors. As such, more research is needed that centers the relationship between Black women school counselors and Black adolescent girls.

The final reason this study is significant is because it will introduce Womanism as a theoretical framework into school counseling research. As of today, no published school counseling studies have utilized a Womanist theoretical framework. Womanism is commonly utilized in the fields of Black studies and religious studies. It is far less common to observe this framework in educational research. Some education scholars, however, have used a Womanist theoretical framework to explore the experiences and contributions of Black women teachers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2005; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; McKinney de Royston, 2020). Although Womanism has not been applied to school counseling research, scholars have utilized this framework in counseling research more broadly (Avent Harris et al., 2023; Haskins et al., 2019). Thus, the present study is significant in that it fills the identified gaps in the school counseling literature, and it presents practitioners and scholars with an alternative lens through which to examine the lived experiences of Black adolescent girls that is grounded in collectivism and love.

Research Questions

Given the limited research dedicated to this topic, this study was exploratory. The study is also one of few to introduce a Womanism theoretical framework into school counseling research. Therefore, the research questions underline Womanism terms and concepts like Homeplace. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How is Homeplace created between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors?
2. What are the perceived benefits of experiencing Homeplace with Black women school counselors for Black adolescent girls?

Definition of Terms

Womanism: Womanism is a social theory that was developed in the late twentieth century to address social and political concerns of Black women. The term was coined by Alice Walker in 1983 in her book, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens". Womanism was created because the feminist social movement failed to include Black women's issues in the fight for social and political equality. Womanism centered Black women's lived experiences by highlighting the impact of intersectionality as Black women experienced multiple forms of oppression at once and by highlighting their strengths.

Homeplace: The term Homeplace refers to the literal and metaphorical space that Black women create in community and connection with one another to experience wholeness, be affirmed, and resist oppressive systems. The term was introduced into Black feminist and Womanist literature in 1990 in an essay written by social activist and writer, bell hooks. Homeplaces are spaces where Black people, specifically Black women, can affirm one another while restoring dignity and self-respect that may be denied to Black women in the larger American society.

Black: The term Black will be used to refer to the racial group of people who are of African descent. The term is not limited to people who were born in America, which is why the author chooses not to use the term African Americans to refer to this group. Black encompasses those who are descendants of the continent of Africa, no matter where they currently reside. The term also accounts for the reality that no matter where one is born, if their skin color is dark and they

are of African descent, they will be perceived a certain way in America and will experience social and political implications because of their physical characteristics (Ibrahim,2017).

Adolescence: The term adolescence refers to the developmental period during the lifespan when humans transition from childhood to adulthood. During this time, significant growth and change occurs in the human brain and body (Backes & Bonnie, 2019; Kanwal et al., 2016). Adolescence is marked by the onset of puberty and typically ends when young adulthood begins in the mid-twenties (Backes & Bonnie, 2019). This period of development can lead to investigation of the complexities of their identity for adolescents (Erikson, 1968).

Protective Factors: Protective factors are resources available to young people to promote well-being when faced with challenges (Resick, 2000). For Black girls, protective factors can help counteract the possible negative personal, academic, and mental health related outcomes associated with constant exposure to oppression in schools. For Black girls, these protective factors may include: Black family, sisterhood with peers and elders, and Black spirituality (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022). Particularly relevant to this study is sisterhood as a protective factor for the challenges faced by Black girls in schools.

Racial Socialization: Racial socialization refers to "exposure to cultural practices and objects, efforts to instill pride in and knowledge about African Americans, discussions about discrimination and how to cope with it, and strategies for succeeding in mainstream society" (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 748).

Racial Identity Development: Racial identity development refers to the developmental process that occurs over time and that involves exploration of group belonging, group affirmation, and group esteem as the individual progresses through different stages of development that can

ultimately result in a secure and confident sense of racial and cultural identity (Cross, 1991; Seaton et al. 2012).

Master Narrative: Master narratives are ideological scripts that assign power and distribute value amongst individuals within a society (Haynes et al., 2016). These narratives are present within schools and classrooms and help to perpetuate stereotypes about Black girls' academic abilities.

Black Love: Unwavering love of Black people and Black culture that catalyzes the struggle for Black liberation and healing (Moore, 2018).

Collectivism: An individual's sense of connection to their group (Carson, 2009). Individuals that belong to a collectivist group prioritize group belonging more highly than their sense of individualism.

Intersectionality: Overlapping marginalized identities that result in interlocking and compounded forms of oppression and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Racism in a U.S. Context

An overview of the history of educating Black students in schools would be incomplete without a discussion about the history of racism in America. Racism is a system of oppression and advantage based on race; it is composed of beliefs in racial inferiority and superiority enacted through structures, institutions, and individuals within a society (Sue et al., 2008; Tatum, 2021). The notion of racism can take several forms. Racism can be expressed overtly or covertly through words and behaviors by a perpetrator who holds more racial power (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). Overt expressions of racism occur blatantly with no attempt to conceal their occurrence (Elias, 2015). Examples of overt racism include: calling someone a racial slur, unapologetically proclaiming racist beliefs on social media, and participating in hate crimes. Covert occurrences of racism are more subtle and typically involve the denial that one is acting in a racist manner (Coates, 2011). This often involves the perpetrator of a racist act claiming they are colorblind or that they "don't see color." Other examples of covert expressions of racism include: racial profiling, minimizing the Black Lives Matter movement by declaring, "all lives matter," and uttering a microaggression (e.g., "You are smart for a Black girl") (Sue et al., 2009).

Just as there are different ways that racism can be expressed, there are also different forms of racism. The three forms of racism that will be discussed are structural racism, institutional racism, and individual racism. Merollo and Jackson (2019) define structural racism as "social system in which racial categorization serves as a primary organizing feature bestowing privilege on some groups and disadvantage on others, [which] serves as the fundamental cause of racial disparities in educational outcomes" (p. 2). This type of racism is built into the structures

that make up American society including the economy, educational system, criminal justice legal system, financial market, housing market, and medical system (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Cohen, 2013; Lukacho et al., 2014; Merollo & Jackson, 2019; Marable, 1993). Examples of structural racism include laws that legalized segregated schools, banks denying Black families mortgage loans for homes in predominantly white communities, and the bias held by many doctors that Black women do not experience pain the same way their white counterparts do and therefore do not need equal pain-reducing interventions (Trawalter & Hoffman, 2015). Structural racism has overlooked and dehumanized people of color, more specifically Black people, in America for hundreds of years. The impact of structural racism continues to be felt in public schools across America today.

The next form of racism that will be discussed is institutional racism. Institutional racism refers to the formal and informal practices that perpetuate inequality within institutions (Clark 2001). The term was coined in 1967 by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, prominent leaders in the Black Power movement. They defined institutionalized racism as "less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. But it is no less destructive of human life … [it] originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation …" (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967, p. 151). Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) also provided specific examples of how institutionalized racism is embedded in American society. Carmichael offered, when "... five hundred black babies die each year because of the lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally, and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community, that is a function of institutional racism" (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967, p.4). Other examples of

institutionalized racism include underfunded public schools in majority Black communities, the concentration of physical illnesses like diabetes, asthma, and heart disease in Black communities, and the mass incarceration of Black individuals across American prisons. These institutions function in conjunction with one another. For example, the school-to-prison pipeline refers to how school policies and practices criminalize Black students and disproportionately funnel them into the prison system (Alexander, 2010).

Finally, interpersonal racism refers to racist actions and beliefs that occur between individuals (Clark, 2001). Interpersonal racism, sometimes referred to as individual racism, can occur within institutions and can be intentionally or unintentionally perpetrated (Clark 2001). Pederson (1995, p.197) defined unintentional racism as "racism [that] emerges as an unintentional action by well-meaning, right-thinking, good-hearted, caring professionals who are probably no more or less free from cultural bias than other members of the general public." This definition highlights a major point that remains relevant today: that racism can have harmful impacts on people of color no matter the intent of the person who is perpetrating the racist action or behavior (Sue et al., 2008).

Examples of individual racism include yelling a racial slur at a Black person, a police officer racially profiling a Black person in a luxury vehicle, and telling a Black person you want to touch their hair because it looks like a fluffy cloud (Clark, 2001). The latter example represents how microaggressions function as a form of individual racism. Sue et al. (2009) defined microaggressions as "... the brief, common place, and daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental slights and indignities directed toward Black Americans, often automatically and unintentionally" (p. 329). Racial microaggressions are like unintentional racism in that they are often dismissed as harmless acts by the perpetrator (Pederson, 1995; Sue et al., 2008).

Interpersonal acts of racism can also look like intentional social exclusion, stigmatization, and threatening the physical safety of people of color because of racist stereotypes held by white individuals who hold more power within society (Brondolo et al., 2012). This form of racism can occur between a white student and a Black student or between white adults and Black students.

Understanding how each type of racism functions within American society is key to comprehending Black youth's experiences within the institutions they occupy and with individuals who hold power because of their race across these structures and institutions. These individuals not only interact with Black students on a personal level, but they are also often in positions of authority making decisions that directly impact their futures. Public schools are one of the primary institutions that school- age youth are a part of from early childhood to early adulthood (Ezikwelu, 2020). This longevity positions schools to have a significant impact on the life trajectories of students: an impact that can be positive when educators are aware of how racism is riddled within public schools, intentionally or unintentionally, or an impact that can cause harm.

The History of Educating Black Students in American Schools

The history of racism in America suggests the American public school system was not created with the intention to provide an equitable educational experience for Black students. The motto "separate but equal" permeated every aspect of American life, deeming it legal for schools to maintain segregation until Plessy v. Ferguson, the case that legalized public segregation, was overturned in 1954 by the Supreme Court in the Brown v. Board of Education ruling to desegregate public schools (Luxenberg, 2019). Unfortunately, racism did not perish along with this legal ruling. The integration of public schools, while seemingly positive, this change signified the beginning of a long journey of unfair and punitive treatment by school leaders and

peers for Black students (Milner & Howard, 2004). This ruling is an example of how structural forms of racism justify how institutions maintain inequality and how individual acts of racism between students and adults occur within institutions.

A present-day shift back to segregated schools may not be the appropriate solution to the challenges faced by Black students in schools; however, it is important to emphasize that the schooling experiences of Black students changed drastically once schools integrated (Milner & Howard, 2004). Desegregation closed many Black schools, placing the burden of leaving a safe school environment to integrate white schools in predominantly white communities that publicly protested their arrival on the backs of Black students (Peters, 2019). Black students experienced significant social and emotional losses when schools desegregated following the Brown ruling (Morris & Morris, 2005). Specifically, Black students grieved the loss of a safe community, caring Black teachers, and access to an accurate, thorough account of Black history (Morris & Morris, 2005). Reflecting on the stories of Black students who were amongst the first to integrate public schools reminds us that present day mistreatment of Black students in schools is not happenstance, but is the legacy of a far-reaching history of racism and discrimination in this country.

In 1957, Elizabeth Eckford was a part of a group of nine Black students who integrated Central High School, an all white high school in Little Rock Arkansas (Fitzgerald, 2007). There are accounts of her holding her head high as she pushed her way through angry mobs of white people protesting her courageous act of integration and yelling racist comments threatening to "Lynch her!" and "Get a rope and drag her over this tree" as she approached the doors of the school building (Fitzgerald, 2007). Daring to look ahead, she noticed the members of the state's National Guard just in front of her, mistaking their presence as a force of safety during one of the

scariest moments of her life. The very guards that were sworn to protect, held weapons of mass destruction in her way to block her passage into the school building (Fitzgerald, 2007). Present day bias, racism, and discrimination experienced by Black students in public schools across America (e.g., disproportional representation in school disciplinary data; Mallett 2017) is a covert form of the more blatant, de jure persecution endured by students like Elizabeth in the early and mid 1900s in this country.

Another example of the impact of desegregation during the 1960s is the forced closing of Trenholm High School (THS). THS was a historical Black high school established in 1877 by a Black community in Tuscumbia, Alabama (Morris & Morris, 2002; Morris & Morris, 2005). The high school was known for providing a quality education to Black children in this community for generations (Morris & Morris, 2002). THS underwent forced desegregation after the Brown ruling, resulting in the building being demolished and nearly 500 high school students were displaced into white high schools across the city. Morris and Morris (2002) wrote,

> No one stood in the schoolhouse door to prevent the African American students from enrolling at the previously all-white schools or stood in front of the building to call them names. Nor were National Guard troops needed to ensure their safety. However, parents and students believed that racial discrimination was practiced by white students in their refusal to sit next to African American students in class, through "accidental/intentional" bumping and hitting in the hallways and in physical education classes, and in the use of derogatory names by both teachers and students (p. 220).

Unlike Elizabeth Eckert who experienced blatant and verbal forms of racism, former THS students recounted memories of far more subtle, personal acts of racism that negatively impacted them as well, even though they were a lot easier to overlook when school desegregation

occurred. They also recalled what it felt like to grieve the THS school culture, to long for positive student-teacher relationships, and to experience hostile treatment by white individuals in the building (Morris & Morris, 2005). Former THS students described having to prove their worth and academic abilities at their desegregated schools (Morris & Morris, 2005). Although these stories are decades old, they are almost identical to the experiences of Black students in schools today.

Controlling Stereotypes Associated with Black Women and Girls

Stereotypes associated with marginalized groups can influence the way others perceive them and impact which opportunities are made available to them throughout their lifetime (Ispa-Landa, 2013)). These cultural stereotypes include: perceiving Black people as criminals (Najdowski, 2023), viewing Black people as lazy and unmotivated, and the belief that Black people are dependent on the government for welfare assistance (Siegelman & Tuch, 1997). Additionally, Black children are often perceived as disobedient towards authority figures, aggressive, and unintelligent (Chang & Demyan, 2007). To break the impact of racial stereotypes down even further, because of the intersectionality of their multiple marginalized identities, Black women and girls face negative stereotypes that are based in beliefs about their racial and gender group identification (Crenshaw, 1989).

Black women and girls have endured preconceived narratives and stereotypes that have shaped perceptions and beliefs about them for generations. Such narratives have been used to justify racist and discriminatory practices and policies (Windsor et al., 2011). Hill Collins (2022) contends that race, class, and gender oppression could not endure without ideological justifications like controlling images to sustain them. Jerald et al. (2017) contend that Black women's awareness of negative stereotypes associated with their group can lead to adverse

mental health impacts for Black Women. This select overview will consider some of the most commonly portrayed stereotypes about Black women through media: the strong Black woman icon, the Jezebel stereotype, and the angry Black woman trope, as well as how these controlling narratives influence how Black girls are perceived and how they are expected to behave, including in schools (Jerald et al., 2017).

The Strong Black Woman

The birth of The Strong Black Woman (SBW) narrative dates to the enslavement of African people in this country (Davis et al., 2018). The narrative focuses on how Black women are often expected to ignore the stressful reality of being Black and a woman in America and emphasizes the need for them to "keep it all together." Despite the need to prioritize their mental health, Black women are expected to press forward and to fulfill responsibilities related to the multiple roles they play in their lives and the lives of others. Black women have been taught and conveyed this narrative through ingrained societal messages as well as media representations. Specifically, Black girls may receive this messaging from family members who praise their strength to defend themselves against oppressive systems (e.g., being told not to allow someone's racist comment upset them because they are strong) (Jones et al., 2021). Despite the toll that bearing it all may have on Black women's mental health, this schema is often endorsed by Black women, who may adopt this schema to cope with their daily stressors (Donovan & West, 2015). Endorsement of the SBW schema has been associated with diminished health outcomes for Black women (Watson & Hunter, 2016).

The Jezebel

Like the others, this controlling image originated during slavery in America. During this time, Black women's value was largely connected to their childbearing and reproductive

capabilities, which in most cases were controlled by enslavers (West, 1995). In addition to this, enslaved Black women endured high rates of rape and sexual abuse by male slave owners who often fathered their children. The Jezebel image refers to the hyper-sexualization and objectification of Black women's bodies. Since slavery, this stereotype has been used as an attempt to dehumanize Black women and to justify harsh sexual and physical violence towards them (Townsend et al., 2010).

Another important example of the historical and global objectification of Black women is the case of Saartjie Baartman (Ashley, 2021). Saartjie was a South African slave who was forced to stand nude in a cage at the center of a "freak show" exhibit in London during the early 19th century. Unwillingly, she endured glaring stares of onlookers as they gawked at her and critiqued her naked body. Saartjie was stripped of her humanity (Ashley, 2021). Today, the dehumanization and objectification of Black women and girls' bodies occur less radically than it did hundreds of years ago, however the impact is still enormous (Anderson et al., 2018). A modern-day stereotypical depiction of Black girls is captured through media portrayals of Black women as promiscuous and submissive beings (Jean et al., 2022; Townsend et al., 2010).

The Sapphire/ The Angry Black Woman

The Sapphire image was developed during the mid-twentieth century and portrayed Black women as loud, iron-fisted, and animated, especially toward Black men (West, 1995). Moreover, this stereotype is associated with Black women's emasculation of Black men (Jerald et al., 2017; West, 2008). Just like the Jezebel stereotype, the Sapphire stereotype has been portrayed through media representations that strip away Black women's humanity. In the case of the Sapphire stereotype, Black women's frustration with societal injustices, however justified it

may be, is minimized and dismissed by portraying this expression as comedic and dramatized (West, 2008).

The Angry Black Woman (ABW) icon is portrayed similarly to the Sapphire stereotype. This image may be what comes to mind when one considers how Michelle Obama has been viewed as overly aggressive and domineering, or how Black women are perceived when they advocate for their due respect or equality (Walley-Jean, 2009). However justifiable their anger about societal injustices may be, to date there is no empirical evidence that suggests that Black women possess more anger than women from any other racial group (Walley-Jean, 2009).

Over time, Black women and girls have learned how to cope with the impact of the stereotypical expectations they endure throughout their lives. Being the target of a group stereotype can cause significant psychological harm for Black women and girls (Jerald et al., 2017). Stereotypes that are considered positive can still have a negative impact on those that they are meant to oppress, even if Black women do not consciously internalize these stereotypical beliefs (Jerald et al., 2017; Neal-Jackson, 2020). Black women may experience stereotype threat, or the socio-psychological distress that occurs during a situation in which a negative stereotype about Black women applies (Neal-Jackson, 2020; Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat occurs when individuals are aware of stereotypes associated with their group and are nervous that they might confirm these group generalizations. Nevertheless, Black women may cope with these intersecting forms of controlled narratives and related oppression by using their voices as power, resisting Eurocentric standards of beauty, leaning on collective supportive networks, choosing to embody or endorse stereotypes that are viewed positively. and becoming desensitized to forms of oppression (Lewis et al., 2012). Although several of these techniques involve empowering ways that Black women learn to cope, the last two examples highlight the reality that the ways Black

women and girls cope may not always be the most affirmative. In other words, the two forms of coping accentuate how Black women and girls sometimes "pick their battles" in the name of survival and self-protection (Anyiwo et al., 2022; Lewis et al., 2012), at the expense of advocating for themselves if needed. Black adolescent girls are also impacted by systemic oppression and negative stereotypes, which leaves them at a greater risk of experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress (Winchester et al., 2022). These symptoms can be intensified by the higher propensity for Black girls to experience sexual abuse, adultification, and criminalization (Winchester et al., 2022). These stereotypes may manifest in schools through dress code policies that inexplicitly target Black girls and bias reflected in recommendations for gifted education (Francis et al., 2019; Morris, 2016)

Black Adolescent Girls

Discussion of the stereotypes associated with Black women and girls is necessary to examine the everyday experiences of Black girls as they live, grow, and interact within various systems, including K-12 schools. It is especially important to attend to the experiences of Black adolescent girls, as the period of adolescence represents a developmental period that is marked by a significant amount of growth and change in the human brain and body (Backes & Bonnie, 2019; Kanwal et al., 2016). This period is marked by the onset of puberty and typically ends when young adulthood begins in the mid-twenties (Backes & Bonnie, 2019). During this period, adolescents endure a high level of neuroplasticity (Kanwal et al., 2016). Neuroplasticity refers to our brain's ability to change and adapt in response to behaviors and experiences (Fine & Sung, 2014; Glasper & Neigh, 2019). The rate at which this cognitive process occurs as well as the occurrence of other major changes during adolescence makes this group highly impressionable, prone to risk-taking, and resilient (Fine & Sung, 2014; Gwon & Jeong, 2018). This period of

development can also lead adolescents to investigate the complexities of their identities (Erikson, 1968). In turn, the cognitive and social developmental changes that occur during adolescence may lead to an increased awareness of social stressors for all youth (Anderson et al., 2018). For Black girls, this newfound understanding may also include awareness of racial and gender stressors which can further perpetuate negative mental health (Agger et al., 2024; Anderson et al., 2019).

Currently, there is a small but growing body of school counseling research that has focused exclusively on the experiences of Black girls. Holcomb-McCoy and Moore-Thomas (2001) were amongst the earliest researchers to acknowledge this discrepancy by highlighting several concerns that are important to consider when counseling Black adolescent girls and to provide a list of implications related to those concerns. Through a case study illustration, Holcomb-McCoy and Moore-Thomas (2001) provided an example of how school counselors can empower their Black adolescent female students by examining their own biases and by becoming educated on challenges facing this group. Since then, how school counselors can position Black girls as math and science learners (West-Olatunji et al., 2010), how school counselors can support the college and career development of gifted Black girls (Mayes & Hines, 2014), how school counselors can cultivate Black girls' positive development through a servant leadership framework (Harris et al., 2017), and how school counselors can respond to Black girls experiences (Mayes et al., 2021) have all been explored through research. The present study will aim to fill a gap in school counseling literature that does not recognize how Black girls cope with the race and gender related challenges they experience in schools with support from Black women school counselors who may simultaneously be experiencing racism and other forms of oppression at the workplace. (Anyiwo et al., 2022).

The Mental Health of Black Adolescent Girls

Black girls' endorsement of cultural stereotypes during adolescence may be related to attempts to cope with a compromised mental health status due to experiencing intersectional forms of oppression (Anyiwo et al., 2022). Black girls may begin to internalize messages about how to survive as a Black girl transitioning to adulthood in America. Anyiwo et al. (2022) suggests, "Black girls' lived experiences of discrimination and preparation for discrimination via racial barrier messages from their parents likely reinforce the necessity of Black women's strength as a tool to traverse direct and systematic oppression" (p. 94). These lived experiences with racism and discrimination coupled with this type of messaging can result in negative mental health impacts for Black girls (Anyiwo et al., 2022). For example, Black adolescent girls have described feelings of sadness, anger, and humiliation when they experience individual acts of racism from their peers or adults (Masko, 2005). Over time, continually experiencing these difficult emotions can create a breeding ground for depressive symptoms, anxiety, and stress for Black adolescent girls (Seaton et al., 2022).

Black Girls' Experiences with Oppression in Schools

There are significant implications for the punitive treatment of Black girls due to the intersectionality of their identities as both Black and girls in schools. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 10.8% of Black girls in the United States were identified as gifted and talented compared with 57.3% of white girls (United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2016). Furthermore, Black girls are less likely to be recommended for Advanced Placement courses (Francis et al., 2019). When Black girls excel academically, their achievement is often met with suspicion and they frequently must fight for others to see their strengths (Anderson, 2020; Wun, 2016). Historical and present-day accounts are reminders that the

challenges faced by Black adolescent girls in schools today are not happenstance. This section will explore the significance of the focus on the period of adolescence and will highlight how Black girls have been criminalized, adultified, and overlooked for opportunities for mental health support and academic advancement in schools.

The Disciplinary Experiences of Black Adolescent Girls in Schools. Researchers contend that present day school disciplinary policies function as instruments in the "afterlife of slavery" (Hartman, 1997; Wun, 2016). The "afterlife of slavery" refers to American slavery's mark on the present-day social structure, policies, and the prison system through the captivity of Black people (Hartman, 1997; Wun, 2016). Punitive school discipline policies can breed conditions for this captivity for Black youth (Wun, 2016). Black girls are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their female counterparts of other racial identities (Hines-Datiri & Carter Andrews, 2020). In addition to schools, other institutions and systems are also impacted by this "afterlife of slavery" including: poverty, police brutality, white supremacy, voting laws, housing discrimination, racial profiling, mass incarceration, unequal access to healthcare. Dillon (2012) suggests, "slavery's mark on the now manifests as the prison, as poverty, as policing technologies; it emerges in insurance ledgers and in the organization of urban space" (p. 121). According to these scholars, no aspect of American life as we know it today is untouched by the mark of chattel slavery. The "afterlife of slavery" manifests for Black students today through punitive disciplinary policies, adultification, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

The school-to-prison pipeline has been defined as "the policies, practices, and conditions that facilitate both the criminalization of educational environments and processes by which this criminalization results in the incarceration of youth and young adults" (Morris, 2012, p. 2).

These prison-like conditions can look like rigid disciplinary policies, the presence of school resource officers, as well as the existence of security cameras and metal detectors around the school building (Mallett, 2017; Morris, 2012). The implications and consequences of the pipeline reach far beyond environmental conditions such as those that were previously enumerated. Recent studies have shown that the most direct pathway to prisons for adolescents is through arrests that occur at school during the school day (Advancement Project, 2010).

Black adolescents, specifically Black girls, are disproportionately caught up in the school-to-prison pipeline (Mallett, 2017; Morris, 2012; Morris, 2016). Out of the 24,093,359 students that make up the American public-school population, Black girls make up only 15.6% of this number. Despite making up such a small fraction of this population, 39.03% of the school-based arrests were of Black girls (United States Department of Education, 2019; Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015–2016). Much of the research conducted on the school-to-prison pipeline has focused on Black adolescent males (Morris, 2012), as Black boys are frequently subjected to punitive disciplinary action for being a perceived threat to public safety (e.g. possession of a weapon, expressing hostility, fighting). Still, Black girls are commonly disciplined for their nonconformity to behaviors associated with white, middle class femininity (e.g. hairstyles, styles of dress, use of profanity) (Blake et al., 2010; Morris, 2007; Morris, 2012).

Furthermore, adultification is defined as a phenomenon "which effectively reduces or removes the consideration of childhood as a mediating factor in Black youths' behavior" (Epstein et al., 2017, p. 2). The controlling narratives and stereotypes developed during American slavery are a significant driving force behind how Black girls are perceived and dehumanized through adultification (Esptein et al., 2017). A recent study showed that Black girls are perceived as needing less nurturing, needing less protection, needing to be supported and

comforted less, being more independent, as knowing more about adult topics, and as knowing more about sex than their female counterparts of other racial identities (Epstein et al., 2017). The implications of the adultification of Black girls are enormous. Viewing Black girls as more adult than their counterparts denies them the right to grow and learn from their mistakes in a way that is developmentally appropriate, as they endure punitive disciplinary measures for their nonconformity. These experiences can have an adverse impact on Black adolescent girls' mental health (Morris, 2016; Sissoko et al., 2023).More specifically, Black girls who are adultified are at a higher risk of risk of experiencing depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns because of the premature stressors they endure (Epstein et al., 2017).

The Academic Experiences of Black Girls in Schools. Haynes et al. (2016) contended, "The bodies of Black girls, like those of Black women become inanimate in the master narrative (hooks, 1981), making their humanity invisible in most instances, with the classroom being of no exception" (p. 383). Master narratives are ideological scripts that assign power and distribute value amongst individuals within a society (Haynes et al., 2016). These narratives are present within schools and classrooms and help to perpetuate stereotypes about Black girls' academic abilities. When master narratives promote racist-sexist conditioning in classrooms, Black girls are often left feeling invisible and overlooked (Haynes et al., 2016; hooks, 1981). Stereotypes function as a tool to justify the dehumanization and inhuman treatment of Black girls (Collins, 1986; Haynes et al., 2016; hooks, 1981). Black girls face several challenges related to their intersectional identities as Black and girls during the school day, and many of these barriers to learning occur in math and science classrooms (Joseph et al., 2019). According to Joseph and colleagues (2019), "… Mathematics is often constructed as a white, male, and exclusionary institutional space. And because of this it can be challenging for Black girls to understand

themselves as math learners and difficult for teachers to understand how the space changes when Black girls are in the classroom" (p. 135). This exclusion and invisibility can occur well before Black girls even step into these classrooms. At the secondary level, Black students are significantly underrepresented in Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses (Anderson, 2020). Black girls continue to be under-referred for gifted services, and when they are referred, their giftedness is often met with skepticism and scrutiny from teachers and peers (Anderson, 2020; Blake et al., 2010; Campbell, 2012; Evans-Winters, 2011; Evans-Winters et al., 2018).

This drastic underrepresentation may be due to a number of factors including: low recommendation rates of Black girls to advanced courses by teachers, school counselors' discriminatory practices that influence the placement of Black girls, and lack of exposure to challenging courses during earlier years of schooling (Francis et al., 2019). In recent years, Black women's attainment of advanced degrees has risen at higher rates than any other group, however the master narrative continues to reinforce a one dimensional, deficit perspective to position Black girls within education (Esnard & Cobb-Roberts, 2018; Evans-Winters, 2011).

Protective Factors Supporting the Well-Being of Black Adolescent Girls

Bennefield and Taylor (2022) suggest, "A more complete narrative ... is that while the white patriarchal society has tried, through various means, to undermine the self-esteem of Black Americans, Black girls are healthy, confident, and full of belief in themselves, their beauty, and their power" (p. 218). Protective factors are resources available to young people to promote well-being when faced with challenges (Resnick, 2000). For Black girls, protective factors can help counteract the possible negative personal, academic, and mental health related outcomes associated with constant exposure to oppression in schools. Most relevant to the current study,

racial socialization, and a positive racial identity, as well as community support, may be especially helpful for Black youth, including Black girls.

Racial Socialization and Racial Identity Development

In response to master narratives and stereotypical beliefs about them, Black girls make meaning of their racial identity in community and connection with other Black people (Mimms &Williams, 2020). Racial socialization and racial identity may help to buffer the negative consequences of racism and discrimination for Black youth (Neblett et al., 2008). Racial socialization refers to "exposure to cultural practices and objects, efforts to instill pride in and knowledge about African Americans, discussions about discrimination and how to cope with it, and strategies for succeeding in mainstream society" (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 748). As an example, Adams-Bass et al. (2014) developed the Black Media Messages Questionnaire (BMMQ) to explore the meaning of Black media stereotypes and their relationship to racial identity, historical knowledge, and racial socialization for Black youth. This study found that affirming forms of racial socialization were related to Black youths' ability to identify positive and negative stereotypes. (Adams-Bass et al., 2014). Thus, findings from this study suggested that Black youth who experience positive forms of racial socialization are more knowledgeable of negative stereotypes and may be more capable of rejecting them.

Racial socialization may help to predict racial identity development for Black youth (Cross, 1991; Hughes et al., 2006). Racial identity development refers to the developmental process that occurs over time and that involves exploration of group belonging, group affirmation, and group esteem as the individual progresses through different stages of development that can ultimately result in a secure and confident sense racial and cultural identity (Cross, 1991). Popular models of racial identity development have not taken an intersectional

lens to consider the simultaneous influence of race and gender on identity exploration for Black women and girls (Williams & Lewis, 2021). Williams and Lewis (2021) developed a conceptual framework to explore the process of gendered racial identity development for Black women. The authors developed a gendered racial developmental process which includes four non-linear phases including: hyperawareness, reflection, rejection, and navigation (Williams & Lewis, 2021). This framework also involves ideologies endorsed by Black women to represent how they perceive and feel about their gendered racial identity (William & Lewis, 2021). Knowledge and application of this gendered racial identity framework may be important to possess when considering Black adolescent girls' school experiences.

Sisterhood and Community Connections

For Black girls, these protective factors may include: Black family, sisterhood with peers and elders, and Black spirituality (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022). Particularly relevant to this study is sisterhood as a protective factor for the challenges faced by Black girls in schools. At a young age, Black girls learn about the value of relying on godmothers, adopting new aunties, and developing a mutual respect for elders (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022). Bennefield & Jackson (2022) discuss what occurs when Black women and girls engage in collective care. They suggest, "The cycle then continues, and more self-assured and self-aware Black girls develop, suggesting this is not a magical or mythical process, but the culmination of the Black family, the sacred bonds of Black sisterhood, and communal care" (p. 225). Thus, although statements like "Black girl magic" are intended to empower Black girls' ability to thrive despite any unfavorable circumstances, phrases like this can also perpetuate a narrative that Black girls are not human, which can strip them of their humanity and further lead to the adultification and criminalization of Black girls in schools (McPherson, 2020).

Communal connections between peers, commonly referred to as “homegirls”, and communal connections with adult women, also referred to as “aunties”, can serve as critical protective factors for Black girls. “Aunties” are Black women outside of the family who provide support that may help Black girls navigate injustices and mitigate negative mental health outcomes (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022). Black sisterhood can challenge master narratives and controlling images that aim to cripple Black girls and women (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022). This type of collective coping can be a survival strategy for Black girls experiencing oppression in schools. The well-known African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” reinforces the importance of collective care for Black girls (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022; Subban et al., 2023). For Black adolescent girls, Black women school counselors may be a crucial part of this village, and they may be well-positioned within schools to step into this “auntie” role to create Homeplace, or the environment of safety created by Black women to experience wholeness, be affirmed, and resist oppression together (hooks, 1990); with Black girls, that may serve as a protective factor against the various forms of oppression they may experience within schools.

The Role of School Counselors

Schools are a major part of communities and school personnel are well positioned to facilitate early identification, prevention, and intervention for students with various needs (Durlak et al., 2011; Kern et al., 2017). School-based mental health services include academic, social, emotional, and behavioral health initiatives that are delivered in a school setting (Kern et al., 2017). In many public schools there are several qualified individuals that provide this individualized mental health support to students. These professionals may include school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and at times therapeutic day treatment therapists. Although the roles of each of these professionals are critical, **s**chool counselors are

uniquely positioned to deliver school counseling programs that promote the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development of students (The Role of the School Counselor, 2023).

School counselors are typically assigned to students either alphabetically or by grade level. Since every student is matched with a school counselor as soon as they enter school, school counselors become a key point of contact for students throughout their academic journey. School counselors maintain conjoint identities as both educational leaders and mental health professionals (DeKruyf & Auger, 2013). They have the advantage of understanding school processes and of possessing mental health expertise (Capella et al., 2011; DeKruyf & Auger, 2013). In some instances, school counselors may be the only professional providing mental health support to students in schools, and they may be the only mental health professional students have access to inside or outside of school (Donohue et al., 2015; Springer et al., 2020). This reality became especially evident during the COVID-19 global pandemic when students had limited access to supportive services due to social distancing, quarantining, and isolation (Pincus, 2020).

Social Justice-Oriented School Counselors

As key leaders within the school and community, it is critical that school counselors identify as social justice agents. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) calls for school counselors to be knowledgeable of social justice school counseling models to implement equitable school counseling services to students from marginalized backgrounds (ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, 2022). Likewise, Ratts and colleagues (2016) developed multicultural and social justice competencies for counselors that address issues of power, privilege, and oppression between counselors and clients. These calls by the profession reflect the critical need for school counselors to move beyond just speaking about social justice and

towards implementation of these competencies to respond to the individualized, multicultural needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

Social justice-oriented school counselors attend to the intersectionalities of their students from marginalized groups and adapt their approach to address these unique needs (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017). Social justice school counseling involves considering the beliefs, cultural values, and worldviews of students from diverse backgrounds (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017). Although school counselors who identify as Black women are themselves a part of a minoritized group, Black women school counselors must still make an active and intentional effort to grow as culturally responsive and social justice-oriented school counselors.

The Relationship Between Black Students and School Counselors

Early research on the relationship between Black students and school counselors suggest that fewer Black students regard the school counselor as a source of support compared to their white counterparts (Pallone et al., 1973). More recent research highlights the role that school counselors play in recommending Black students for advanced coursework. This work suggests that Black students are recommended for advanced level classes at much lower rates than white students (Anderson, 2020). These types of interactions can be harmful for Black students who are ultimately the ones who can be harmed by the denial of equitable social, emotional, behavioral, and academic support that school counselors should be trained to provide students (ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, 2022).

Due to the deficit focused perspective about Black girls that infiltrates education, school counselors may interact with Black girls through a biased lens. Mayes and colleagues (2021) found that Black girls felt like their school counselors "didn't even care" (p. 145). More specifically, a Black girl who participated in this study felt like her school counselor didn't

believe she could be successful in advanced level courses. The school counselor's opinion about her academic ability may have been influenced by stereotypes associated with Black girls' academic talents (Francis et al., 2019). Furthermore, most of the Black girls in this study felt emotionally disconnected from their school counselor. The researchers proposed, "The lack of interactions didn't allow for Black girls to be seen for their humanity and for their emotional development to be connected to their academic success and career development" (Mayes et al., 2021, p.145). The Black girls in the aforementioned study needed a school counselor who could create a safe environment where they could receive unbiased academic and emotional support.

Black Women School Counselors

In more recent years, researchers have highlighted the experiences of Black women school counselors in the workplace (Parker et al., 2022; Wines, 2013; Wines 2015). Wines (2013) conducted an autophenomenography study to explore her own experiences as a Black woman school counselor, school leader, and researcher in a predominately white school. One of the limitations identified by the researcher was the need for more research that highlights the experiences of Black women school counselors (Wines, 2013). Wines (2013) found that Black women school counselors felt excluded by white counselors and disrespected by school leaders who often question their expertise and readiness to lead. Furthermore, Wines et al. (2015) researched the phenomenology of Black school counselors in predominantly white school districts from a humanistic perspective. Although this study did not exclusively focus on Black women school counselors, nine out of the ten participants identified as women. The results of the study revealed that participants felt there were hegemonic mindsets present within the school, their performance was constantly under evaluation, they experienced cultural isolation, they experienced workplace resistance, they desired to implement self-help skills, and they believed

that the members of the majority group need to enhance their multicultural awareness (Wines et al., 2015). These findings and their focus on Black women school counselors may inform this current study by considering their professional and emotional needs and what they may gain in connection with their Black girl students. Dollarhide et al. (2013) explored the work experiences of school counselors of color. This study did not focus specifically on Black women, however thirteen out of nineteen participants (68%) identified as Black. Of this number, 92% of the Black participants identified as women. Dollarhide and colleagues (2013) found that school counselors of color perceived themselves as positive role models for students of color, and they felt they could establish authentic relationships with their families. Parker et al. (2022) highlighted the similarities between the systemic oppression experienced by Black adolescent girls in schools and Black women mental health providers in schools. This work emphasizes the commonality between the experiences of each of these groups by underscoring the systemic challenges that Black women school-based mental health professionals contend with in schools, and may support the valuable role that Black women school counselors can play in creating Homeplaces for Black girls to resist oppression as they are affirmed by a school counselor who may be able to relate to the challenges they experience at school.

Black Adolescent Girls and Black Women School Counselors

It is also important to reflect on how Black women school counselors may be able to support the positive development of Black adolescent girls. It is known that racial socialization may be a protective factor for Black girls. Racial socialization can have a favorable impact on Black youth's overall well-being, as well as their academic outcomes (Jones & Neblett, 2017). Likewise, a sense of positive racial identity may support Black youth who experience racism and discrimination at school. Racial identity has been linked to positive beliefs about one's racial

group, a high sense of self-esteem, and may serve as a moderator for race- related stress (Jones & Neblett, 2017). It is also known that a strong sense of racial identity may in turn impact a client's preference for a Black counselor (Townes et al., 2009). For example, one study revealed a positive association between minority status and clients' preference for a Black counselor, because clients experienced greater comfort with a Black counselor who may share cultural identities and may relate to racial and discriminatory challenges they have experienced (Goode-Cross, 2016; Nioplias et al., 2018). Taking this into consideration, Black women school counselors may be educationally and socially equipped to create and sustain spaces for Black adolescent girls to resist discrimination and racism within school.

The notion "Black is not a monolith" is an important reminder for Black women school counselors who may share common experiences of navigating life as a Black woman in America with Black students. Millner (2006) explored the practices of Black teachers who were successful in educating Black students. He discussed the danger in expecting Black teachers to automatically attain the knowledge and commitment to teach Black students just because they share a racial group (Millner, 2006). Although Millner's work focused on Black teachers, the findings may transfer across education to school counseling. As advocates for systemic change, social justice- oriented Black women school counselors may utilize their shared identities and experiences when connecting with their Black girl students, but research should examine students' environments to work towards eliminating barriers to student learning and achievement (Ratts et al., 2007).

Historical Overview of Homeplace Created by Black Women and Girls in America

The term Homeplace was created by bell hooks to describe the environment of safety that has been crafted by Black women throughout history to rest and resist oppressive systems

(hooks, 1990). This definition and safe space described are also conveyed by other words and phrases. What makes Homeplace unique is the way that Black women meticulously and deliberately build metaphorical and sometimes literal walls around an environment to ward off systems and people who threaten the safety of the space. Although bell hooks introduced this term to Womanist and Black Feminist literature in the late 1990s, Black women have been creating these sites of resistance globally long before this time. Many of these environments were fostered by African women during pre-colonial rule to resist patriarchal rule and other injustices (Collins, 1990). Some examples of Homeplace shaped by Black women throughout history include: healing spaces created by African women before chattel slavery in America, kitchens during and after slavery in America, Black churches during the civil rights movement, and online safe spaces created for Black women today (Collins, 1990; Davis, 1999; Gayle, 1992; Wade, 2019).

Another example of Homeplace in relation to Black women's sense of being, is reflected in Black women's historical role as spiritual healers and leader. Black women who were spiritual healers and leaders in African societies helped to secure women's freedom in the face of oppression and provided other women with a place to express their anxieties and concerns (Anyinam, 1997). This spiritual safety created by Black women and sought out by Black women may be a connection to the way Black women in the diaspora use spirituality as a source of survival in modern times (Gayle, 1992). Gayle (1992) suggests "despite the racism, sexism and classism that segregated Black world, the world of spirituality and magic was one where Black women teachers, preachers, healers, activist and resistors worked with as many skills, power and second insight as their Black male counterparts" (p. 107). This quote conveys how Black women exerted power and influence through spirituality that was sometimes absent in other spheres of

life. The influence that Black women have held through spirituality has helped them in the fight against oppression throughout history.

The role of Black women's kitchen space reflects another example of the creation of Homeplace among Black women. Once relegated and banished to work in the kitchen by enslavers, Black women have reclaimed this space as a place of resistance against oppressive conditions and a space where knowledge and rituals are transferred and Black community is centralized (Collins 1990; Davis, 1999). In a similar vein, hooks (1990) discussed what it was like to visit her grandparents' house as a child. She shared the following about visiting their home:

> I speak of this journey as leading to my grandmother's house, even though our grandfather lived there too. In our young minds houses belonged to women, were their special domain, not as property, but as places where all that mattered in life took place– the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls. There we learned dignity, integrity of being; there we learned to have faith. The folks who made this life possible, who were our primary guides and teachers, were black women. (p. 383)

This powerful image created by hooks is one that is common amongst the Black community. For generations, Black women have protected the home against forces that could threaten the safety of the space despite the proximity of the threat to the space. In the earlier example of Black women protecting the kitchen during chattel slavery in America, Black women transformed the kitchen space from one of inferiority to a legacy that illustrates Black women's ability to overcome adversity despite others' efforts to dehumanize them (Davis, 1999).

Today, Black women and girls have utilized the internet to create global Homeplaces. These virtual spaces have eliminated barriers related to distance that previously prohibited Black women in different places from connecting and sustaining relationships. Wade (2019) discussed the importance of safe spaces for Black girls. She suggests that when these spaces are not available in schools, Black girls often turn to online communities to forge safe and supportive spaces. These safe spaces became especially important for Black women during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Several scholars have explored the need for online safe spaces to emerge to support marginalized populations during the unprecedented time of global disconnection and isolation (Miller & McDonald, 2020; Stanley et al., 2022). Despite the growing presence of online threats to safety, these cyber communities continue to be key Homeplaces for Black girls and women because they provide a space where they can be in control of their activities (Bordreau, 2007).

Homeplace and Womanism

The idea of Homeplace relates to the Womanism theoretical framework. "Womanism is to feminism as lavender is to purple" (Walker, 1983). This quote from Alice Walker's work on Womanist prose, In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens sets the groundwork for the necessity of a theoretical framework like Womanism. The term Womanism was coined by Alice Walker during a time when feminism was infiltrated by white women. Although critics of Womanism often pit the two movements against one another, the prior quote highlights that was not Walker's intention. In her work, Walker (1984) communicates her support of and involvement in the feminist movement, while simultaneously recognizing the need for Womanism as a movement to center the experiences of Black women. The quote by Alice Walker suggests that the movements are more alike than they are different but emphasizes that ignoring the differences in Black

women's struggles with racism, sexism and homophobia could have serious consequences on their lives.

One significant consequence is a diminished mental health status for Black women. The application of Womanist methods when counseling Black adolescent girls may promote client empowerment and may free the client from the burden of feeling like she is to blame for problems that exist because of racism and sexism in our society (Bryant-Davis et al., 2023). Integrating Womanism into work with Black girls and women could center the healing and empowerment of these individuals (Bryant-Davis et al., 2023).

The key tenets of Womanism as identified by Walker (1984) include: be womanish, love oneself, love others and pursue empowerment. The tenet *womanish* was derived from the way Black women elders addressed Black girls who they perceived as "too grown" or "fast." Walker reframed this term in a more positive light to refer to the boldness and wisdom that Black women possess. The tenets *loving others* and *loving oneself* celebrate the aspect of community and collectivism within Black culture and recognizes the role that Black women often fulfill in families and Black communities as nurturer and caretaker. Instead of viewing this caring nature from the stereotypical viewpoint of Black women often displayed in media and through text, Walker highlighted this tendency as collectivist strength, encouraging Black women to remember to extend this same love and grace to themselves (Walker, 1983). The last tenet, *pursuing empowerment* highlights the value of Black women having pride in themselves, maintaining a positive sense of self, and pursuing equitable outcomes for all people, especially marginalized groups. This also involves celebrating the successes of other Black women and encouraging a positive sense of self-worth in others (Walker, 1983).

Returning to the connection between Homeplace and Womanism, understanding how Homeplace is created between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors may be best achieved using a Womanism lens. There are several parallels between Homeplace and Womanism that should be highlighted as Homeplace is being explored in this study. First, Womanism and Homeplace both emphasize the love, support, and care that Black women can gain when they are in community with one another. Next, the focus on collectivism is apparent across Womanism and Homeplace. Homeplace is a space created by Black women for Black women where they can experience wholeness and be affirmed by one another (hooks, 1990). Womanism's tenets are accomplished within Homeplaces where Black women find rest, experience wholeness, affirm each other and resist oppressive systems all while extending love to one another and growing in their Womanish identity (hooks, 1990; Walker, 1983). The researcher centered these parallels throughout the data collection and analysis processes which will be discussed further in Chapter Three of this study.

Summary of the Problem

This section discussed the historical underpinnings of racism and discrimination throughout American public schools. This background demonstrates a pattern of punitive treatment towards Black adolescent girls in schools and suggests that present-day, elusive practices of racism in schools are the legacy of more overt forms of racism in this country such as slavery and segregation. The period of adolescence is a time when significant change occurs in the mind and body for young people. During this time, adolescents become more aware of their own identities. For Black young people, this heightened awareness may also mean an enhanced knowledge of racial stressors. For Black girls, this racial awareness may also include stereotypes and controlling narratives associated with Black women and girls.

Racial socialization may buffer the negative effects of racism for Black girls and may support their racial identity development process. A strong sense of racial identity may also combat the challenges associated with being criminalized and adultified in schools. School counselors are positioned within schools to support the mental health needs of students and to support their racial socialization. Furthermore, Black adolescent girls who have advanced in their racial identity journey may prefer to work with counselors who share their racial and ethnic identities. Black women school counselors are mental health professionals, school leaders, and many have themselves experienced racism, sexism, and discrimination in their own personal and professional lives. Not only are Black women school counselors educationally equipped to provide mental health support to their students, but as Black women, they may also be able to support the racial socialization of Black girls by creating a Homeplace for Black girls to feel affirmed, empowered, and to resist racial stressors within the school building. Still, limited research has explored what Homeplace with a Black woman school counselor may provide Black adolescent girls in terms of emotional and mental health related support.

Conclusion

The current study explores the experiences of Black adolescent girls who have established counseling relationships with Black women school counselors. The study seeks to understand the essence of these relationships by exploring how Homeplace is created and maintained throughout the relationship by utilizing a Womanist perspective. The impact of this study can be experienced across counseling and education. Counselor education programs benefit from a culturally focused study that highlights school counseling research. Although Black school counselors are the focus of this study, future school counselors from various racial backgrounds can learn from this work. This study may support counseling students'

understanding of the roles of race and gender on counseling relationships, which may improve their development as culturally responsive counselors in training. School districts, schools and school counseling teams benefit when the results of a study like this are disseminated back into the community. They are reminded how important it is to prioritize the hiring of Black women school counselors and are called to respond to the unique needs of Black adolescent girls. Society benefits from research that centers the experiences of the Black women and girls who graciously offer the world a sneak peek into the Homeplace that happens when they are together.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between Black adolescent girls and their school assigned Black women school counselors during high school. This study also strove to consider how Homeplace was created within these relationships. Overall, the literature reflects the disparities in educational experiences amongst Black girls who are enrolled in American public schools (Anderson, 2020; West-Olatunji et al., 2010; Wun, 2016). A positive relationship with a school counselor has been associated with better life outcomes for young people (Lapan, 2012). Furthermore, for Black youth, a strong connection with a Black adult may promote racial socialization, which has been associated with positive mental health outcomes for this group (Adams-Bass et al., 2014; Davis & Stevenson, 2006). For Black girls, the relationship with a Black woman school counselor may be even more critical due to their shared, intersectional identities as both women and girls, and as Black people (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022). Black women school counselors may be uniquely positioned within schools to play a critical role in protecting Black adolescent girls against oppressive experiences in schools; they may serve as a protective factor against the various forms of oppression Black adolescent girls may experience within schools. However, few studies have explored the relationship between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors to understand more about what this connection may offer Black adolescent girls and how Black adolescent girls perceive these relationships.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How is Homeplace created between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors?
2. What are the perceived benefits of experiencing Homeplace for co-researchers?

Qualitative Research

The problem identified by this study was best aligned with a qualitative research approach. First, due to the lack of research about the phenomenon (i.e., the relationship between Black girls and Black women school counselors) being studied, qualitative research allowed the researcher to gain a deep understanding of a novel phenomenon that is relevant to the field of school counseling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach allowed the researcher to gain greater knowledge regarding the creation of Homeplace between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. Second, qualitative research was selected because of its focus on amplifying the voices of individuals from marginalized populations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lyons et al., 2013). As such, the design of this study allowed the researcher to discover nuances that may have otherwise gone unstudied or overlooked pertaining to the experiences of individuals from the targeted population.

Third, qualitative research is grounded in the belief that reality is constructed by the individuals experiencing a phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984). By examining multiple realities, the use of qualitative research permitted the researcher to understand various perspectives. This aspect of qualitative research can be empowering for co-researchers, especially for those who have experienced oppression and whose perspectives have historically been silenced or misinterpreted in research. The researcher opted to use the term “co-

researchers" instead of "participants" to identify the individuals who contributed to the study to emphasize the significance and value of their active role in the qualitative research process (Pope, 2020). Additionally, the term "participant" often has a negative connotation amongst individuals from minority groups given the history of mistrust and exploitation that Black people have endured in the research participation (Scharff et al., 2010). A notable example of this exploitation is the 40-year longitudinal Tuskegee syphilis study that claimed the lives of over 100 men (Brandt, 1978; Scharff et al., 2010).

The fourth reason qualitative research was the most suitable research approach for this study is, because of the commitment that is necessary from co-researchers to be involved throughout the qualitative research process (i.e. multiple interviews, observations, focus groups, member checking) the approach is collaborative in nature. This component of qualitative research aligns with the Womanist theoretical framework which recognizes the value of community and collaboration as tools to resist oppressive systems (Drake-Burnette, 2016; Walker, 1983).

Since few qualitative studies have explored the collective experiences of Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors in schools, this study will add to this body of research which may hopefully lead to the development of a framework that may provide researchers, school counselors, and other constituents with specific strategies and language to more effectively understand the experiences, nuances, and unique needs of Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors in schools. Ultimately, the researcher strove to contribute to the call to decolonize school counseling and counselor education research by recognizing the relevance of Womanism as a theoretical framework and Black adolescent girls and Black women

school counselors as important foci in school counseling research (Mayes et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2020; Smith & Geroski, 2014).

Qualitative Case Study

The qualitative case study methodology involves the researcher asking the questions "how" and "why" to explore the complexity of a single case or multiple related cases in relation to a specific experience (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984). The case study research approach was among the first type of research using qualitative methodology (Starman, 2013). According to Simons (2009) "Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program, or system in a 'real life'" (p. 21). Given the paucity of research that currently exists regarding the relationship between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors, a case study approach allowed the researcher to gain a novel, in-depth and focused understanding of multiple cases from this population. The current study employed a multiple case study design as data from multiple cases were analyzed to describe the phenomenon of interest (Eisenhardt, 1989). The rationale for choosing a multiple case study design was that it could offer multiple perspectives on how Homeplace was created in relationships between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors, and how it was related to behavioral, social, and emotional outcomes for Black adolescent girls.

The lack of research that has been conducted related to the topic of the study made this study a good fit to employ a case study design. Case studies are appropriate for studies when there is a need to obtain an in-depth understanding and appreciation of an issue (Crowe et al., 2011). Given the expectation of boundary setting posed by the case study approach, the researcher used specific criteria to define each case, or the "unit of analysis" (Miles &

Huberman, 1994, p. 25). Boundary, or parameter setting in case study qualitative research refers to the specific criteria set by the researcher to determine how the "case" within a specific study will be defined (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Baxter and Jack (2008) recommend that the researcher ask themselves the following questions to determine how their cases will be defined: "Do I want to analyze the individual? Do I want to "analyze" a program? Do I want to "analyze" the process? Do I want to "analyze" the difference between organizations?" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545-546). Based off these recommendations, the researcher explored specific criteria (e.g., existing literature and research questions) to define each case as Black women school counselor and Black adolescent girl pairs.

Ultimately, the case study qualitative research approach was determined to be the best design for this study. The approach allowed the researcher to gain deep insight into the lived experiences of Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselor and, consequently, to give voice to co-researchers (Creswell, 1998; Mustakas, 1994). The multiple case study process permitted the researcher to capture the full range of these lived experiences. The findings of this study were foundational given that very few studies have thoroughly, and intentionally explored these relationships. The researcher's decision to select this method as the qualitative research approach for this study was based on the need to examine the complexities, commonalities and differences that exist across cases. The extended time spent analyzing data from each case led to an in-depth analysis and understanding of the information shared by co-researchers. In turn, this detailed review led to the development of comprehensive themes and a thorough discussion of the findings. This case study may only be the beginning of this line of inquiry, and future research may utilize this study to further explore the phenomenon of interest using other approaches of qualitative methodology.

Theoretical Framework

Acknowledging Womanism as a viable theoretical framework is an important step in decolonizing counseling and psychotherapy (Bryant-Davis et al., 2021). Decolonizing counseling involves the acknowledgment of pain that has been inflicted by members of the white majority in the U.S onto individuals who hold one or multiple oppressed identities, recognizing the importance of incorporating indigenous healing strategies into practice, empowering those who are marginalized, and the active resistance of racism (Bryant-Davis et al., 2021). The current study strives to contribute to the goal of decolonizing counseling and therapeutic practice by utilizing Womanism as its sole theoretical framework and exploring the development of Homeplace between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors.

The current study is well suited for utilization of Womanism as a theoretical framework. First, is the need for Womanist-centered studies in school counseling research. Most studies conducted using this framework are not counseling related. Religious and spiritual studies are the fields that have embraced Womanist research the most (Banks & Lee, 2016; Graham, 2016). Few counseling studies have adopted Womanism as their sole theoretical framework (Parker et al., 2022). Haskins and colleagues (2019) created a conceptual framework comprised of Womanist counseling strategies that can be integrated into counseling practice with Black women. Those that have utilized Womanism have developed strategies and methods that may be able to be transferred to school counseling research (Haskins et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2022; Williams, 2005). Such strategies include cultivating validating connections, dissociating with the dominant discourse, embodying cultural reflections, observing womanish supports, and actively pursuing social justice (Haskins et al., 2019). The researcher referenced these strategies throughout the development of the study and during the data collection and analyses processes.

Another reason that Womanism strongly suits this study as its theoretical framework is because of Womanism's focus on centering the experiences of Black women. Utilizing a multiple-case study framework will allow the researcher to understand the essence of the counseling experiences of Black girls who have school counselors who identify as Black women stud and Black girls' perception of the creation of Homeplace within these relationships while simultaneously centering, uplifting, and empowering the voices and experiences of the Black girls and women who agreed to be a part of the study. Walker's (1984) core tenets of Womanism and the proposed counseling strategies that were derived from her work will guide every step of this research process (Haskins et al., 2019; Williams, 2005). First, the researcher invested time in reading and studying the original Womanism work, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, as well as other researchers' interpretations of Walker's work. Engaging in this process not only supported the researcher in becoming more knowledgeable about the framework, but it was also a way to honor and respect the legacy of those that have paved the way for her to do this work.

The concept of Womanism also aided the researcher in the development of interview questions. The researcher was intentional about developing interview questions that captured the essence of being womanish, loving others, loving oneself, and pursuing empowerment (Walker, 1983) Additionally, the researcher focused on the value of cultivating validating connections and promoting social justice when developing each interview question (Haskins et al., 2019). Examples of interview questions used in this study include: (a) Tell me how love was expressed and experienced in the relationship with your school counselor; (b) Tell me how the connection with your school counselor influenced your view of yourself; and (c) Tell me how joy was experienced in the relationship with your former student.

Next, the researcher embodied a Womanist mindset when interacting with study co-researchers. This mindset included respecting, centering, and empowering the voices of the women and girls who were a part of the study. Concepts derived from Womanism like Homeplace was a central focus of the research study (hooks, 1990). Key-words and phrases in Womanist literature supported the development of a priori codes when the researcher began the data analysis process. Additionally, the researcher employed Womanism ideals throughout the entire data collection and analysis process. For example, the researcher emphasized connection and love in the development of this study's interview questions, developed a priori codes grounded in Womanism literature, and deliberately chose to integrate the findings of individual interviews in the presentation of each case in the findings chapter of this study, thereby intentionally emphasizing the connection between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors and the overlaps highlighted between their interviews. An important part of the research process is how the findings of the study are disseminated and shared throughout the community. While one goal is to publish the findings in an academic journal to allow other scholars across the field of counselor education to interact with Womanism, the researcher will utilize a Womanist framework throughout the research process by ensuring Black women and girls' voices are centered from start to finish. This study aims to demonstrate how Womanism-grounded studies are relevant to school counseling research.

Recruitment and Procedures

To identify cases for this study, the researcher began by seeking out Black women school counselors who were the assigned school counselor for Black adolescent girls at some point in their high school career and who recently graduated high school within the last four years. The researcher began this process by sharing the recruitment flyer for this study with professional

networks and sharing it across her personal social media webpages (*Appendix H*). As the researcher was contacted by prospective co-researchers for this study, she emailed an invitation letter to them describing the topic of the study and specific criteria that needed to be met to participate in the study. Please see *Appendix A to* view the Introductory Letter to co-researchers.

From there, this the researcher used purposeful criterion sampling to finalize the list of former high school students and school counselor pairs who met the criteria for participation in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Glesne, 2008). To meet eligibility for participation in this study, prospective co-researchers had to satisfy the following criteria. Recent high school graduates were eligible to participate in this study if they: (a) identified as a Black woman; (b) were assigned a Black woman school counselor at some point during high school in which they identified as supportive; (c) had a former school counselor who agreed to participate in study; and (d) were between the ages of 18-25. School counselors were eligible to participate in this study if they met the following criteria: (a) identified as a Black woman and (b) were the assigned school counselor for the identified former high school student at any point during her high school career. Co-researchers received a $20 gift card to Target in return for their involvement in this study.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher cannot rely on instruments that were created by other researchers because engaging in qualitative research requires the researcher to critically reflect on the meaning of what is being shared by co-researchers through observations and interview data (Xu & Storr, 2012; Stake, 1995). Instead, the researcher is the instrument. This means that the researcher is responsible for developing their own open-ended questions to be used when collecting data from co-researchers (Xu & Storr, 2012; Yin, 2009). Just like co-

researchers, researchers construct meaning of the world through their own lived experiences; and they may be influenced by these experiences during the research process. Specifically, daily experiences can impact how the researcher develops instruments, interacts with co-researchers, and how they understand and interpret what co-researchers share. As such, the qualitative researcher should use a reflexive journal and be transparent about their positionality, so readers can see how the researcher engages in knowledge construction and how they manage their biases (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Watt, 2007).

Reflexive Journal

The researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research process. Reflexivity refers to personal thoughts and behaviors that qualitative researchers observe throughout the study to enhance self-awareness regarding their positionality and how their identities and related experiences may shape the research and writing processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity can also help researchers consider ethical aspects of their study to attend to, as they become more aware of their biases and beliefs (Berger, 2015; Lichtman, 2010). The reflexive journal can help researchers document the decisions they make, record emergent ideas, and track progress throughout the research process (Orange, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reflexive journal can provide space for the researcher to discuss the commonalities and differences between themselves and the study's co-researchers. Dodgson (2019) suggests, "If a researcher clearly describes the contextual intersecting relationships between the co-researchers and themselves (reflexivity), it not only increases the creditability of the findings but also deepens our understanding of the work" (p. 220). Contextual intersecting relationships refer to how contextual factors race, location, socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexuality, marital status, and other cultural factors may shape how a researcher perceives and analyzes data

(Berger, 2015). The reflexive journal was a central part of how the researcher strove to consider their unique identities and contexts consciously and transparently and how they impacted how she viewed the experiences of the co-researchers in the current study. A copy of the researcher's Reflexivity Journal can be found in *Appendix B.*

Positionality Statement

In addition to a reflexivity journal, the researcher also constructed a positionality statement. The positionality statement differs from the reflexivity journal in that it was constructed at the beginning of the research process before data was collected. The researcher contributed to her reflexivity journal throughout the research process. The positionality statement was referenced throughout the duration of the study and dissertation writing process. The document is available for readers to learn more about the researcher's background. The purpose of writing the positionality statement is for the researcher to disclose information about their salient identities, as well as their social, cultural, gender, class, and political standing. These identities and experiences can shape who the researcher is and how they collect and analyze data shared by co-researchers (Berger, 2015). By reflecting on these identities at the beginning of the study, the researcher strove to enhance their self-awareness to address how personal biases, beliefs and values may have influenced the research process. This process is especially important when confronting biases or beliefs that may be harmful for co-researchers or that may skew how the researcher assesses the data. Below is an excerpt from the researcher's positionality statement.

> In high school, I was assigned a Black woman as my school counselor. I did not know her well and only began to interact with her when it was time for me to consider post-secondary planning. Despite our shared identities, I did not experience Homeplace

within my relationship with my school counselor. I did not identify her as a major part of my support system and never leaned on her for support when I experienced oppression at school. I did not know it at the time but given the qualifications that are required to become a school counselor, she was trained to do more than just provide academic support to me and my peers. I am sure she faced challenges with role ambiguity and being overworked because of the lack of resources that were available at my high school However, as a Black adolescent girl navigating changing relationship dynamics, I may have benefited from emotional support from her.

After graduate school, I became a school counselor at a high school in a suburban area. Most of the students and staff at the school identified as white. I intentionally established relationships with students and families on my caseload, but quickly realized that the more accessible I made myself to my students, the more frequently they visited me. This became especially true for my students who were Black girls. As time progressed, I noticed that Black girls that were not even on my caseload would come to see me in my office. Black girls would often visit me to process emotions after experiencing racism or discrimination perpetuated by peers or school personnel. When I asked them why they were stopping by, I would receive responses like, “It’s easy to talk to you,” “You understand what I’m going through, “or “This is the first place I thought to come to.” These same students would also invite me to experience their joy when were accepted into college, welcomed new family members, or when they wanted to celebrate attaining some other personal goal. Experiences during my childhood, young adulthood, and career a school counselor influenced my decision to pursue this study.

The full positionality statement can be found in *Appendix C*.

Data Collection

To gain a thorough understanding of the relationship between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors, the researcher collected data from one-on-one interviews with recent high school graduates and school counselors,

Demographic Information

Demographic information was collected at the beginning of individual interviews with co-researchers. Collecting demographic information allowed the researcher to understand how co-researchers self-identified with each category. The researcher asked the following demographic questions during individual interviews:

1. What is your racial identification?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your age?
4. What are your pronouns?
5. Where was the high school you went to/work(ed) at located?
6. What year did you graduate high school? (Question for former students)
7. What year was your former school counselor your assigned school counselor in high school? (Question for former students

Interviews

Individual interviews were the primary method of data collection for this study. Interviews are used primarily to learn more about co-researchers' lived experiences, to make meaning of these experiences, and to contribute to the body of knowledge related to the topic being studied (DiCicco & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews conducted by the researcher followed a semi-structured format. Semi-structured interviews utilize pre-generated interview questions,

but also provide the interviewer with autonomy and flexibility to explore pertinent topics that come up during the interview that may help not have been captured through structured interview questions (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). At the beginning of the interview, the researcher invited co-researchers to engage in a Homeplace reflection activity to ensure they grasped the definition of the term. Please see *Appendix G* for a copy of this activity.

First, in depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with the recent high school graduates via Zoom. The researcher chose to conduct interviews via Zoom to eliminate any travel or location barriers that may otherwise prevent some co-researchers from participating in the study(Janghorban et al., 2014). These interviews lasted an average of 40 minutes *(Range* = 25 minutes – 55 minutes). In Womanist qualitative research, the semi-structured interview can provide an opportunity for Black women to tell their stories from their own interpretation of their experiences (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). Heath (2006) refers to Black women telling their stories as "participatory witnessing". The interview questions were developed using Womanism concepts (e.g., Tell me how love was expressed and experienced in your relationship with your school counselor) as well as school counseling and education research that highlights the school experiences of Black adolescent girls (e.g., Tell me what this relationship offered you when faced with racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim using an online secure, artificial intelligence-powered transcription service. The transcription service did not consistently capture accurate reflections of what was shared during interviews, so the researcher carefully reviewed each transcript for accuracy and corrected any errors reflected in the transcript. See *Appendix D* to view a copy of the interview protocol.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence regarding methodology, data collection and interpretation to ensure quality of the research study (Connelly, 2016). Trustworthiness can also decrease the occurrence of unethical behavior in qualitative research. Careful attention to trustworthiness helped the researcher enhance the truth value of this study. To ensure trustworthiness throughout the study, the researcher applied the following quality indicators: credibility, transferability, and dependability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the researcher accurately captured the data collected from co-researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To strengthen this study's credibility, the researcher employed the following strategies: member checking and peer debriefing.

Member Checking. In qualitative research, member checking refers to the process of soliciting feedback from co-researchers of a study (Motulsky, 2021; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking occurred at two points during the research process. First, throughout each interview the researcher repeated what co-researchers shared and paraphrased their statements to provide space for clarification if necessary. The second form of member checking occurred one to three days following each interview. Specifically, the researcher provided a transcript of each co-researcher's recorded interview via email so they could review this information for accuracy. If co-researchers indicated that they wanted any information to be changed, the researcher made these changes within a day and returned the updated information to co-researchers for another review. This occurred for two co-researchers and the changes they requested were due to errors reflected on their transcript because of information that was inaudible during the interview.

Peer Debriefing. Peer debriefing refers to the review of data collected as well as the research process by someone with expertise and knowledge regarding the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Miller, 2000). More specifically, the peer debriefer may challenge the researcher to think critically about assumptions, methodology, and interpretations; the peer debriefer may also provide a different perspective in relation to data interpretation to push the researcher to consider all angles of issue (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher's peer debriefer had extensive background in counselor education research and utilizing qualitative research methods with research focused on Black women. Additionally, the peer debriefer identified as a Black woman, a licensed professional counselor, as well as a professor of counselor education. The researcher shared coded transcripts with the peer debriefer via email. The peer debriefer provided regular feedback to the researcher by recommending different codes and encouraging the researcher to consider different perspectives as she evaluated the data.

Transferability

A second factor of trustworthiness in qualitative research is transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the goal of qualitative research is not replicability, transferability refers to how patterns and descriptions may be applicable across contexts (Stahl & King, 2020). Transferability can be achieved through thick description. Stahl and King (2020) offer, "transfer is only possible when a thick description provides a rich enough portrayal of circumstance for application to others' situations, and usually at the behest of the local constituents" (p. 27). Thick descriptions are thorough accounts of co-researchers' experiences, meanings, and understandings (Younas et al., 2023). Thick descriptions are not just what co-researchers say with their words, but what may also be communicated through their tone of voice, body language, and other non-

verbal indicators. To achieve thick descriptions, the researcher documented the decisions that were made, recorded emergent ideas, made note of non-verbal behaviors, and tracked progress in a reflexive journal (Orange, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reflexive journal was discussed in greater detail in the researcher as an instrument section of the paper. A copy of the researcher's reflexive journal can be found in *Appendix B.*

Dependability

The final factor of trustworthiness that will be discussed here is dependability. In qualitative research, dependability refers to the integrity of the data (Morrow, 2005; Williams & Morrow, 2009). For dependability to be achieved, the researcher followed systemic procedures throughout data collection and data analysis (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). For example, the researcher created an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). An audit trail is a record of the systematic steps taken to conduct a dependable qualitative study (Lincoln, & Guba, 1982). The audit trail was comprised of raw data including interview transcripts. The audit trail also included data reconstruction and synthesis by identifying themes, definition, and connections to existing literature. Lastly, the audit trail included the researcher's reflexive journal where the researcher documented thoughts, feelings, personal introspections, and research procedures.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of developing a detailed description of the cases being studied (Stake, 1995). Since this study utilized a multiple case study approach, the researcher conducted an analysis of themes within each case. A theme analysis involves identifying key issues that emerged from data. Following the within case analysis, the researcher conducted a cross-case analysis to analyze themes across the cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Before within-group and cross-case analysis could be conducted the researcher had to complete interview

transcripts, code data, and identify themes. This section will explore the researcher's data analysis process.

Transcription

All interviews with co-researchers were recorded and transcribed utilizing a secure online artificial intelligence transcription service (Sonix, 2024). McMellan et al. (2003) stated "The transcript is a tool that helps qualitative researchers make sense of and understand interviewees' experiences and perceptions" (p. 74). Once the interview transcripts were returned by the transcription service, the researcher reviewed each transcript for accuracy, corrected errors, and sent a copy of each transcript to each co-researcher. The co-researchers were invited to participate in member checking by reviewing the transcripts and summaries for accuracy. Following this step, the researcher used a three-step process that included a priori coding, emergent coding, and theme identification. Each of these steps will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

A Priori Coding

Coding is an important part of data analysis because patterns and insights may begin to emerge from the data. Coding can also help to ensure transparency, decrease bias, and accurately represent co-researchers' voices (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). A priori coding refers to the process of establishing codes based on a theoretical framework before examining the collected data (Weber, 1990). This type of coding is also known as deductive or "top down" coding. Although a priori codes were developed beforehand, the researcher also used an emergent coding technique whereby codes that emerged from the collected data were established. A priori codes were developed using Womanist literature and concepts. This approach helps focus codes to ensure that the issues central to the theoretical framework are not overlooked during data

analysis. A priori coding helps anchor the findings to the theoretical foundation (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The researcher applied a priori codes to co-researcher statements during the coding process. Please see *Appendix E* for a full list of a priori codes.

Emergent Coding

Emergent coding was utilized when categories that emerged through data were not captured by a priori codes. This type of coding is often referred to as inductive or "ground up" coding. Emergent coding involves the process of identifying codes that are more narrow or specific that come directly from the data. This type of precision can help to identify complexities and diversity in the data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Emergent coding was useful for the researcher since this topic has had very little research devoted to it, and because Womanism has rarely been applied as the theoretical framework for school counseling research studies. Emergent coding allowed the researcher to uncover nuances in the data that ultimately led to new meaning. By utilizing emergent coding the researcher was not limited to only a priori codes and uncovered nuances that may not have been reflected through a priori coding. For example, "loyalty" was a code that emerged from data that was not reflected through any of the a priori codes. Additionally, emergent codes may also be named through in-vivo coding. In-vivo coding occurs when the content of the co-researcher's quotation becomes the code (Arijie, et al., 2021). The researcher in the current study used in-vivo coding several times when the co-researcher articulated something so eloquently that a priori codes or emergent codes were not necessary.

Theme Identification

After the researcher transcribed and coded interview transcripts, the researcher identified relevant themes. Themes are overarching, abstract categories that explain a phenomenon (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). During this process, the researcher looked at similarities and differences

between codes to identify relationships amongst codes that provide conceptual insight about each grouping of codes. Mishra and Dey (2022) suggest, “Ideally one should be able to extract three to four themes that explain the phenomenon under study (p.189). Following the coding process, four themes were identified to respond to this study’s research questions. When deciding on names for themes, the researcher can identify one single word or a short phrase that describes the connection between the group of codes and the phenomenon that is captured through these codes.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher took several steps to ensure that ethical practices were in place to inform co-researchers of their rights and to protect them against unethical treatment. Before participating in this study, co-researchers were required to read and sign the informed consent document to acknowledge their understanding of what they could expect during and after data collection, and to acknowledge their understanding of all their rights as a co-researcher. The informed consent document included the following information: eligibility criteria, explanation of data collection methods (e.g., interviews), limits of confidentiality, co-researchers’ right to withdraw from the study at any time, risks associated with the study, pseudonym selection process, authorization to publish the results of this study, and who to contact if any concerns regarding the study arose. The co-researchers were required to provide signatures on the agreement and a copy of the signed document was emailed to each co-researcher prior to their interview. Before signing the document, the co-researchers were given the opportunity to ask and have answered any questions they may have had regarding the process. The researcher maintained confidentiality by allowing the co-researchers to select a pseudonym of their choice to be used when identifying them throughout the study. Any other identifying information was

also changed to protect the identities of co-researchers. Furthermore, signed confidentiality agreements, video and audio recordings were all stored in a secure password protected online file. A copy of the informed consent form is available in *Appendix F.*

Institutional Review Board Evaluation

In addition to requiring a signed informed consent agreement before co-researchers could be a part of this study, the researcher also operated under the approval of the International Review Board. The School of Education Human Subjects Review Board evaluated and approved this study. The Human Subjects Review Board is responsible for upholding federal regulation by ensuring that human co-researchers' rights are protected. The board thoroughly reviewed the following protocol before approving this study: a rationale for the study, procedures, description of the co-researchers, copy of all interview questions, the informed consent form and documentation of required Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training.

Conclusion

This study was designed to examine the relationship between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors during high school. The researcher utilized Womanism as a theoretical framework and was especially interested in whether the notion of Homeplace was present amongst their relationships. If Homeplace was present, the researcher wanted to know more about how Homeplace was created and sustained. This study was amongst the first to investigate this phenomenon, and the findings of this study could have profound implications for future research in school counseling and counselor education. Chapter Four will discuss the results of this study, and Chapter Five will discuss implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter will present the findings of this study by discussing the themes derived from the data. As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to explore the creation and meaning of Homeplace between former high school students who identified as Black women and Black women school counselors. Womanism was utilized as the theoretical framework for this study, and served as the lens through which the data were analyzed. Major elements of Womanism in connection with Homeplace include love, boldness, and collective care (Walker, 1983). These elements were deliberately considered throughout the data analysis process. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How is Homeplace created between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors?
2. What are the perceived benefits of experiencing Homeplace for the co-researchers?

Tables 1 and 2 present demographic information shared by the co-researchers during individual interviews. Table 1 presents demographic information for former high school students, and Table 2 presents demographic information for school counselors. Co-researchers' names have been replaced by a pseudonym selected by the co-researcher during their interview to protect their identities. These tables include co-researchers' chosen pseudonyms, the chosen pseudonym for the other person in their case, age, and racial identification. Table 1 also includes the year they graduated high school and the year(s) in high school during which they were assigned their school counselor.

Table 1
Former Students' Demographic Information

Former Student	School Counselor	Year(s) of High School Assigned to School Counselor	Age	Year Graduated High School	Racial Identification	Gender	Pronouns
Moné	Dr. Jacobs	10th - 12th	20	2021	African American	Female	She/her
Alexis	Mrs. Morrison	9th	18	2023	Black/ African American	Female	She/her
Leigh	Mrs. Hooks	9th - 12th	21	2020	Black/ African American	Female	She/her
Ashanti	Ms. Shakur	10th - 12th	19	2023	African American	Female	She/her
Myrtle	Dr. Walker	9th	19	2022	Black and Proud	Female	She/her

Table 2
School Counselors' Demographic Information

School Counselor	Former Student	Age	Racial Identification	Gender	Pronouns
Dr. Jacobs	Moné	33	Black	Woman/Female	She/her
Mrs. Morrison	Alexis	33	Black	Woman	She/her
Mrs. Hooks	Leigh	37	Black/ African American	Female	She/her
Ms. Shakur	Ashanti	29	Black	Female	She/her
Dr. Walker	Myrtle	41	Black	Female	She/her

Case I: Moné and Dr. Jacobs

During her interview, Moné shared that her decision to participate in this study was largely influenced by the significant impact she credits her former school counselor Dr. Jacobs as having on her life. She explained, "Knowing how much she has impacted me and encouraged me, why wouldn't I want to share?" Throughout her interview, Moné was overcome by emotion as she reflected on how important the relationship with Dr. Jacobs was to her. Several times, she had to step away from the interview to retrieve a tissue to wipe away her tears. Moments of emotion peaked when Moné discussed what it was like to be notified of the death of a family member while at school, the subsequent journey of grief that followed, and Homeplace that was created because of the care provided by Dr. Jacobs during these moments.

Support through Grief

While tears fell from her face, Moné described what it was like to be notified of the death of her grandfather at school. She shared, "My day was ruined. I found out in school. I still got classes to go to. I still have practice at the end of the day, but my mind [wasn't] right." Moné reflected on how difficult it was to experience this loss at school and how comforting it was to be able to lean on the Homeplace that existed in her relationship with Dr. Jacobs for emotional support during this time. She said that Dr. Jacobs made herself available to her and helped her feel less alone through her grief. Moné shared,

> It was just like...I remember just crying so much. And I just had somebody there that was just like… like you didn't have to understand. But, I felt that I was not alone. Especially finding something out that in a public space. I was done.

Through sniffles and cries, she recalled the Homeplace Dr. Jacobs created with her to process this loss. Moné shared, "She was the first person I went to, and I stayed in her room. I stayed in her office all day and she helped me through a lot." The care and love that Dr. Jacobs offered

during one of the most challenging days of her life was a representation of Dr. Jacobs's love for her. Dr. Jacobs shared, "I think we talked about it a little bit, and then she was like, "Can I do something?" So, we found some little jobs and tasks... you know, end of the school year, there was a lot to do." Dr. Jacobs's own experiences with grief during early adolescence impacted how she provided support to Moné. She said, "...that's one of the main interactions between her and I that always stands out or come out to me because I felt her. I lost someone around her age. I was in the eighth grade, but I just remember being kind of like, 'What do I do'" Their shared experiences with grief shaped how Dr. Jacob's care was expressed within their Homeplace during this formative time.

Affirming Intersectional Identities

The relationship between Moné and Dr. Jacobs evolved over the years. Hence, the Homeplace Moné shared with Dr. Jacobs remained a place where Moné could experience trust and be herself. Moné shared,

> [As] I've gotten older that relationship changed from, "I need you for guidance or like I'm growing, I need an outlet to have a positive figure in my life you done helped me get to where I am." Now I can talk to you real.

As their Homeplace grew stronger, so did their comfort with one another and Moné's sense of boldness. Moné felt comfortable enough to share her unfiltered identity with her school counselor. Moné described this, saying, "I felt at ease. I felt comfortable…Comfortable. I never had to hide how I felt, ever. Regardless of a good feeling or a bad feeling. I could be my 100% authentic self around her." Moné belonged to several social groups that have historically faced marginalization and systemic oppression in the United States. As a Black woman who also identifies as gay, the intersectionality of her marginalized identities may have made Moné more

vulnerable to experiencing discrimination due to her racial, gender, and sexual identities. Moné described what it was like to navigate her sexuality in high school. She shared, “So, when I, when I was in high school, you know, that was at a time where, you know, I was coming out or I wasn't out… I could go to Dr. Jacobs about anything.” Dr. Jacobs was there for Moné as she illustrated boldness by confronting some of the challenges that may have accompanied wrestling with the decision to “come out” to her peers and family. Moné could lean on their Homeplace for care during this time. She explained,

> I knew I could tell her before I told my mom, before I told a friend. Most times she probably knew first. Or like I said, even if she didn't like [understand]... Me coming to her about, you know, me being me. I didn't have nobody to talk about that, let alone comfortable enough. It didn't matter how uncomfortable I was, she wanted to hear it. Even if you didn't want to hear it, she never made me feel that she didn't want to hear it.

No matter the emotion she was experiencing, Dr. Jacobs was available to Moné. Dr. Jacobs was one of the few people that Moné could turn to for acceptance throughout high school. Moné shared, “Being one of those few people in a really big school surrounded by a lot of judgment… I remember so vividly being able to talk to her about anything.” Although they didn’t share all the same identities, Moné recalled what it felt like to turn to their Homeplace during this time in her development. She shared,

> And even if Dr. Jacobs can't understand being Black and gay, she's seen it. So even if she can't understand like as a Black female… at all, she knows how I feel, like if I expressed how I feel, she would be able to understand.

The Homeplace created within their relationship provided Moné a space where she could be her whole self and where she would be valued for the boldness that it took to do so.

Eliminating Barriers

Dr. Jacobs's desire was for their Homeplace to be a place where Moné could be her authentic self while she reached her personal and academic goals. This was illustrated by her willingness to speak out against antiquated school policies that shaped what classes Moné and her peers were qualified to take. Dr. Jacobs shared, "So putting myself in front of the school board… I think protecting students physically and then also protecting them from policy that doesn't have their best interest." She used her influence as a school counselor to advocate for her student, but she did so in a way that centered the partnership that existed within their Homeplace by inviting Moné to be an active collaborator in the process. She discussed how important it was to consult with Moné before assuming that she needed her to step in to advocate on her behalf. Dr. Jacobs discussed what her consultation with Moné entailed. She shared, "Because I always ask, 'Do you want you want me to just to listen? Or you want me to listen and come up with some action steps?'" In turn, Moné's response informed how Dr. Jacobs acted on Moné's behalf.

Dr. Jacobs advocated for policy change that would benefit Moné and all other Black students. In addition to addressing systemic issues, Dr. Jacobs worked alongside Moné to eliminate barriers that could have prevented her from reaching her personal goals. Moné shared,

> [She] helped me like... [Telling] me how to apply for a college or even at the time getting into the specialty center I was in. Like, she helped me with that. She provided me with so many opportunities. Even just the information... I could, I can never say I didn't know about… I could never say I didn't know. Because even if it's not just for me, she made sure we were all straight.

Their Homeplace was strengthened as Dr. Jacobs made sure that Moné was knowledgeable about what opportunities were available to aid her in achieving her goals. This was important to Dr. Jacobs because she knew what obstacles could stand in the way of her success as a Black woman. Dr. Jacobs shared,

> You know, Blackness is not a monolith, but being able to look at them and either seeing myself, seeing my brother, seeing my best friend, or seeing people that I grew up with and just having that cultural connection… it's just different when you're talking to a mirror and you're looking at the younger version of yourself, or the younger version of your mom, or the younger version of your sister, my best friend.

Within their Homeplace Dr. Jacobs was reminded of the similarities and overlaps in their experiences, which further strengthened their relationship.

Connection and Relationship

Their common identities allowed Dr. Jacobs to understand what knowledge Moné needed before she even realized she needed it. This intentionality was even reflected in how Dr. Jacobs collaborated with Moné. Dr. Jacobs discussed how she viewed Moné as an equal partner in their relationship. She shared,

> It was the apology with it though too. I hope that... I feel like with Moné... I know it's a discourse like, "Oh, I'm not one of your little friends," but I feel like I treated them like an equal of sorts, you know? Yes, there's an age difference. Yes, there's a power dynamic. Yes, I'm an employee here, you're a student here, but I'm not going to talk down to you. I think that I, or I hope that helped create that safe space.

This relationship dynamic helped create a strong sense of comfort in their Homeplace. Moné shared, “You could talk to her. It didn't have to be dialed back or talk a certain way with a certain

type of dialect or slang. She understood, and it was reassuring, and she could relate." The freedom and comfort experienced within their Homeplace promoted and cultivated a sense of boldness for Moné. She shared,

> I feel encouraged, like I know that I'm strong. I know that I can... I know that I'm a strong woman, that I can do anything that I set my mind to, no matter what it is. And even like to this day. Now like... a lot of the things that I do for myself now wouldn't have been able to happen because I wouldn't have had the confidence… I know that I didn't get here by myself.

Moné expressed a sincere gratitude towards her school counselor for supporting her in becoming the person she is today. Together, Dr. Jacobs and Moné created a Homeplace where they could fully experience all their emotions, including those of joy.

Moné described the excitement she experienced when she looked into the crowd and saw Dr. Jacobs cheering her on at her basketball games. Dr. Jacobs enjoyed being in Moné's company. She shared,

> So yeah, I just always... she was just a student that I always enjoyed being around and working with and helping in any way I could… Just seeing her, just having a student who was excited to see me as much as I was them, because be real that's not always the case.

Moné's interview concluded with a discussion about what it was like to encounter Dr. Jacob's on graduation day. Through tears she reflected on this moment, sharing,

> She gives the best [word drawn out for emphasis] hugs. And I say that because I remember my graduation. You know. I'm a crybaby, as you see. I saw all my friends, we all graduated. Like we've known each other since fifth grade, and we're about to disperse

> and go run for our lives, and I was good. I saw Dr. Jacobs, she hugged me, and I started bawling. Sorry, I'm going to get another tissue [Moné got up to get another tissue].

The love that Moné experienced through Homeplace with Dr. Jacobs overwhelmed her at graduation. Moné also recalled how Dr. Jacobs fostered an environment in which she felt as though she had Dr. Jacobs's undivided attention. She shared, "She didn't have to help me any time I was bawling my eyes out or whether it be good news, she always had time for me." Amidst her peers who had known her most of her life, Dr. Jacobs was the one who moved her to tears.

Case II: Alexis and Mrs. Morrison

Alexis described the nervousness she felt the first time she met with her school counselor, Mrs. Morrison as a freshman. She said this meeting was strongly motivated by her mother, who insisted she get to know her school counselor. Alexis described how her initial feelings of nervousness disappeared when she met Mrs. Morrison and after engaging with Mrs. Morrison's bubbly personality and seeing her two college degrees that hung on the wall. Alexis shared,

> So, when I first walked in, of course I saw the diplomas on the wall, and I saw the TU [one]. So, I was like, okay, this is good, you know, because I wanted to go to TU since I was three or four.

Realizing that she shared a dream with Mrs. Morrison laid the foundation for the Homeplace that would transpire in their relationship.

The Past Shaping the Future

Alexis, a first-generation college student, always aspired to attend college. She described that since toddlerhood, she knew she wanted to attend Terry University (TU) for college. So, when she walked in Mrs. Morrison's office and noticed her degrees from TU, she believed that

Mrs. Morrison was someone who knew what it would take to get there. Alexis shared, “I know that she knows how to get there. She knows what she's talking about. She's an expert. She's been there, she's done that.” Alexis’s interest in Mrs. Morrison’s alma mater, TU, created an instant connection between the two of them because Mrs. Morrison had achieved something that Alexis aspired to accomplish. TU, a predominately white institution (PWI) known for academic rigor and excellence, had a reputation of not being welcoming to Black students.

Alexis discussed what it was like to tell people she wanted to go to TU. She said, “…when you mention to someone that you want to go to TU and you're a Black female, they're going to look at you and they're going to be like, ‘Oh, you want to go to TU?’ or they just feel as if you're not TU material.” Mrs. Morrison was also familiar with this reaction, given her previous experiences. Consequently, she described how Black women were there to remind her that she could be successful as a high achieving Black girl when she began her college journey. Mrs. Morrison shared, “If it wasn't for Black women speaking up for me to be able to take advanced level classes, I don't know... so I knew my role at that school was so much deeper than that.” Just as Black women had done for Mrs. Morrison, the Homeplace Mrs. Morrison created in her relationship with Alexis propelled her to remind Alexis of her abilities and talents when other people attempted to threaten them. Alexis shared, “…because someone had acknowledged me and not dismissed me…” she felt empowered to pursue this goal despite contradictory messaging she received from others. Alexis described what it was like to get a negative reaction from another counselor when she told them she wanted to go to TU. Alexis shared,

> I told another counselor I want to go to TU, and she was a Black counselor. So that really surprised me, you know? Although she said that, I didn't feel bad or anything. My mind didn't change I didn't walk out of her office rethinking my decision to go to TU because I

had already told someone or someone had already made me feel as if I wasn't crazy, you know, it was possible.

Because of the Homeplace she experienced with Mrs. Morrison, Alexis's belief in herself was not shaken by others' doubts. Alexis described how the reassurance she received from Mrs. Morrison kept her anchored in her confidence,

> So, from then on, I wasn't hesitant to say that I wanted to go to TU… So, by her saying that, it really just helped me along the way, because of course, that wasn't the last time that I would hear that. Like, I still hear it now when I go back home.

Overall, Alexis exhibited boldness by remaining steadfast in her commitment to attending TU. The confidence she exuded in the face of opposition is an example of how the Homeplace experienced in her relationship with Mrs. Morrison served as a protective factor for Alexis.

Knowledge of Systemic Barriers and School Counselor's Influence

The Homeplace between Mrs. Morrison and Alexis was shaped by Mrs. Morrison's knowledge of the perspectives held by some people "back home" and systemic issues prevalent within their school. She understood that Black students and families in their community were often distrustful of systems that had historically directed hate and discrimination towards them. She stated, "...and we may even get into this, but how some people, historically speaking, don't always have trustful relationships of schools, school systems, or even just systems in general... institutions." She further shared, "I knew the culture of the school I worked at. I think it's so important when you're a school counselor to know where you're working." Mrs. Morrison's understanding of school culture and institutional knowledge promoted Homeplace in their relationship because it permitted her to recognize barriers and discrimination that Alexis faced in school. Mrs. Morrison stated, "Even though it was a predominantly Black school, the people that

inhabited those spaces where you're taking higher level courses were not always Black or the teachers were not always Black." As such, Black students were not always encouraged to succeed in rigorous academic environments. Her knowledge of the environment and system she worked in prepared Mrs. Morrison to be well-positioned to advocate on behalf of Alexis.

Mrs. Morrison's understanding of the societal and institutional barriers experienced by Black students and families situated her to better address these issues with Alexis when they arose. Morrison also discussed her awareness of microaggressions experienced by Black girls. She shared, "I know that there can be microaggressions in schools and specifically spaces where Black girls are the only Black girls you know or Black people in general in these classes... messages that maybe I know she received." Her knowledge of school culture helped her pinpoint the underrepresentation of Black student in advanced level courses. Mrs. Morrison explained,

> Even just the fact that at that particular high school, there were programs where they were competitive, like the Governor's School, we had Early College, we got STEM Academy. I'm like, no, Alexis can apply for one of these and we're not going to allow just the people who look different... Who are white to be the only people that inhabit these spaces.

This quote illustrates how Mrs. Morrison's knowledge of systemic issues and school culture shaped the Homeplace they experienced by allowing her to utilize her influence to increase Alexis' access to opportunities. Mrs. Morrison shared,

> She would reach out to me and she would ask questions, and we would have quite a few conversations regarding Alexis and some of the classes that she was taking but then other really cool opportunities like taking college level classes, dual enrollment, AP and anytime there was an opportunity, I would make sure that I knew this is a student that could do this or could really benefit from this particular program.

Because of this Homeplace, Mrs. Morrison always kept Alexis on her radar when considering students who could benefit from advanced coursework and specialty programs. She would even use her institutional power to review Alexis's application materials and provide feedback about how she could strengthen the application materials. She explained,

> I knew every recommendation letter, when I was doing her application for [College Scholars], if I'm not mistaken. Filling out every little thing that is correct. I'm making sure that the application is meticulous, making sure that I provide a space if you need your essay completed, "Do you need me to read your essay? Let's sit down and..." Because I knew these things. I knew that this was going to be important for Alexis to be a part of any program, any of these dual enrollment programs… She ended up going to [College Scholars], and I knew that was important for me to be able to sit down and make sure that her application looked beautiful, because I wanted her to be a part of those spaces.

Partnership with Student and Family

Homeplace was enhanced in the relationship between Mrs. Morrison and Alexis through partnership with Alexis's family to provide collective care to Alexis. Mrs. Morrison explained, "I knew her family as well, so I talked a lot to her mom. I would say we had a pretty good relationship." Mrs. Morrison recognized that they all played an important role in Alexis's success. She shared,

> I brought them in as partners. "I'm not the expert on your kid. I didn't have your child. Yeah, I know some things about classes that they should take and some college stuff, but truly speaking you know your child and you've been doing this up until this point, so why

> wouldn't I want to be in contact with you as a school counselor? Why wouldn't I want to partner with you to make sure that your daughter has the best opportunities possible?"

Mrs. Morrison's partnership with Alexis's family strengthened Homeplace between them because it allowed her to recognize and respond to Alexis's unique needs by getting to know her family and their respective dynamics. In addition to the connection she had with her student's family, she viewed Alexis as the most important member of the collective. Mrs. Morrison shared,

> Just making sure to invite her in on it because she's... I mentioned parents being the expert, but she's also the expert in what she wants. So really, truly giving her an opportunity to talk about the things that she wants.

By joining forces with Alexis and her family, their Homeplace was strengthened, and Alexis was empowered to make personally meaningful decisions about her future.

Common Threads

The Homeplace that Alexis and Mrs. Morrison experienced in their relationship was rooted in the similarities they shared. Mrs. Morrison was able to relate to many of the experiences that Alexis was having as the only Black student in many of her advanced level classes. She shared,

> I realized I went to a school that she wanted to go to, I took dual enrollment classes like she took dual enrollment classes. She recognized that, "Oh, you've done things that I did and that I want to do, and vice versa." It's like man, I remember when I was in your shoes, and I was the only Black girl in this class, or I was taking classes at Governor's School.

Mrs. Morrison also discussed how Alexis's interest in her alma mater, TU, also allowed them to deepen their Homeplace. Alexis discussed what it was like to have a school counselor like Mrs. Morrison who she had so much in common with. She shared, "And she was engaging with me too, so that was really important. I really remembered that… ... how special it was walking into the counselor's office and being able to relate with her." For Alexis, having a school counselor who she could relate to was inspiring for her. She explained, "So, seeing that she went to TU just was such an inspiration because I was like, 'There's no way. If she can do it, I can do it.'" Because of the Homeplace they experienced, Alexis was exposed to Mrs. Morrison as an example of someone who had graduated from TU. The Homeplace they shared empowered and emboldened Alexis to pursue her dreams of attending TU.

The cultural connection they shared within their Homeplace allowed Mrs. Morrison to introduce Alexis to aspects of Black collegiate culture, which helped her to envision herself as a college student at her dream school and Mrs. Morrison's alma mater, TU. She shared,

> And then she may have been the one who introduced me into Greek life, Black Greek life. I'm not sure, but she sparked my interest from then on out, you know? And so that's when I was like, "Oh yeah, I want to go to TU," but what do I want to do there? What do I want to do while I'm there? What do I want to do after I'm there?

The cultural connection they shared within their Homeplace coupled with Mrs. Morrison's influence as a school counselor helped boost Alexis's belief that she could accomplish her dreams no matter what institutional or systemic barriers stood in her way.

Their commonalities strengthened the Homeplace experienced between them – one where they could be their genuine selves. Mrs. Morrison shared,

> You can laugh and let your hair down in this space, and not feel like you're being judged. I think we had moments where we would just laugh about questions she had or just her experiences in the classroom-- things that would happen. We would talk about this joy and this energy that would occur when we were talking about her future.

There was an effortless freedom experienced in their Homeplace. Alexis shared, "I know that she'll be there, always there to talk to. Always there, cheering me on… I've never had a Black female counselor who was so sweet and so welcoming and so supportive." Mrs. Morrison described what it felt like to not have to code-switch with Alexis. She shared, "There's something beautiful about when Black women get in a space and it's just like you walk in, you're able to... you ain't got to code switch. You ain't gotta do this or that or speak proper." Their Homeplace also allowed Mrs. Morrison to escape the demands to speak or act a certain way that are often placed upon Black women.

Alexis explored what it was like to trust Mrs. Morrison without fear of her misusing the information she shared with her. Alexis described what she believed it would have been like for her if she would have shared her experiences as one of the only Black students in her classes outside of their Homeplace. She explained,

> If I were to go tell this to a white teacher they'd be like, "Oh, how do you know that?" "Don't say stuff like that"… So, being able to tell someone all of this, all that I've seen without having to worry about, "Oh, you may be called in to talk about this with like a principal" or something like that. It just felt so good. I had had no weight on my shoulders after telling her everything that I saw, it was just all out on the table. It felt good.

Alexis could trust Mrs. Morrison with confidence that she would honor the strength it took for her to share her truths.

Case III: Leigh and Mrs. Hooks

Having a Black woman as a high school counselor had a significant impact on Leigh. She shared,

> My teachers were always Caucasian, my counselors, my whatever it was, they were always [Caucasian] ... So, I thought it was huge when I got to high school that I had one, a Black female teacher, and two, a Black female school counselor.

Having a Black woman as a school counselor allowed Leigh to experience Homeplace in a way that had been previously inaccessible to her at school. This newfound Homeplace with Mrs. Hooks opened the door for her to receive culturally responsive mental health support and to address some of the cultural factors that shaped her understanding of her mental health.

Mental Health Support

Homeplace within their relationship strengthened during sophomore year when Mrs. Hooks supported Leigh through changes in her mental health. She shared, “Because of what I was going through in life at the time, dealing with anxiety, especially rooted in academics, became a very personal relationship.” Leigh shared that Homeplace was created by Mrs. Hooks being available to care for her when she experienced heightened anxiety in school. She said,

> I had someone there to talk to and I didn't always have to call mom or whatever it was to talk me off a ledge or come get me or whatever it was. It was nice having that person in that moment.

Mrs. Hooks helped create a nonjudgmental and emotionally supportive space for Leigh as she explored her mental health and learned different ways to manage her anxiety. She further stated,

> That summer I started figuring out meds and doctors and things like that… So when I got back to school at the beginning of my sophomore year, and I just didn't have teachers that understood that, that wanted to work with me…so, I started going to her in those moments, and she always just let me have my moment.

The Homeplace Leigh shared with Mrs. Hooks became a refuge for her when other school personnel did not understand her.

"A Healthy Balance"

The Homeplace they shared allowed Mrs. Hooks to both push and encourage Leigh as she supported her through mental health challenges. She shared, "I think she would say that I gave her a healthy balance of the days that she needed to have a moment, I let her have those moments." At the same time, because of the Homeplace that existed between them, Mrs. Hooks strove to achieve a balance between tough love and nurturance when supporting Leigh. Mrs. Hooks shared,

> In the days I needed to push her, I would push her and say, "I'm going to push you to work through this in this moment. It's not going to feel good, but we got to do it because there's a greater goal in me pushing you right now."

Mrs. Hooks explained that this approach required the safe rapport they shared within their Homeplace. According to Mrs. Hooks, "You can't do that with every student. I think you have to know which students you can do that with and where they feel safe enough while you're doing it with them." Indeed, the Homeplace they shared allowed Mrs. Hooks to tailor her approaches to cater to Leigh's evolving needs.

Learning and Collaborating with Family

As Leigh gained more knowledge about her mental health through Homeplace with Mrs. Hooks, this process was simultaneously happening for members of her family. Their Homeplace provided Leigh the safe space to process emotions that she was not used to exploring. Leigh shared, “So, never really had I had an interaction with another person of color, let alone a Black woman, that allowed me to explore those feelings and emotions.” As Leigh learned to manage her anxiety alongside Mrs. Hooks, she described the concurrent journey that was happening for her mother. Leigh stated, “That’s not talking poorly about my mother, but as I was learning about those emotions, [my mother] was also learning that you can talk about these things, you can feel these things, you can have those conversations.” She described that Mrs. Hooks helped normalize some of the emotions she experienced. Leigh shared, “So it was the normalizing it between my family and talking about it, but just seeing that it is okay to talk about these things and feel these things, and I'm not the weird one, just feeling them.” The Homeplace between Leigh and Mrs. Hooks provided a space for both Leigh and her mother to normalize mental health concerns. Changes in Leigh’s family’s perspectives on mental health in the Black community was the fruit of the Homeplace she and Mrs. Hooks nurtured together.

Mrs. Hooks discussed how she collaborated with Leigh’s family to support her mental health, sharing, “There was times that her mom would call me and just say, can you go check on her?” Leigh also discussed how her mother relied on Mrs. Hooks to care for her daughter in her absence. Leigh explained, “…my mother having her on speed dial. And I call my mom and I'm in some unknown bathroom in my high school, they're trying to get to me.” The Homeplace shared between Mrs. Hooks and Leigh was strengthened through the connection with Leigh’s

mother, which allowed her to reinforce coping strategies that Leigh's mother used at home. Mrs. Hooks shared,

> My experience with her mom was one of love, of support. Mom would push her when she needed to be pushed, would not always give her an easy out because she would say, "This is going to be something you deal with for life, and so we're going to deal with it now. You staying home is not going to solve the problem. You working through whatever's happening as you're at school, when you have to show up for your dance thing or you have to show up for this event, that's what we're going to have to push through now because this is a life skill."

The trust shared with Leigh's family made collective care effortless for Mrs. Hooks. She shared, "Which that always makes the job smoother when parent or guardians trust you with their child because their child is with you for seven hours of the day or out of school for seven hours a day." As trust was established within their Homeplace, Mrs. Hooks could partner with Leigh's family to address Leigh's mental health concerns at school.

"I Knew That There was Love There"

In their Homeplace, Leigh recalled feeling as though she had Mrs. Hooks' undivided attention, even when she had other responsibilities to fulfill. She described Mrs. Hooks as, "...allowing me to just sit in her office and talk when I know there's a whole slew of things that she probably needed to be doing or needed to be going to." Leigh shared how she knew love was present in her relationship with Mrs. Hooks because of their Homeplace. She explained, "She was always, always, 'Hey, what's going on?' Even if you weren't in her office, she made it a point to get to know who you are as a person, which is how I knew that love was there." Leigh also shared,

> So, taking the time out of her schedule to, again, check in and circle back around to know that what I was saying was actually being heard, thought about, and then acted upon was another way that she showed that love.

Mrs. Hooks's intentionality and consistency communicated her love and care for her former student. This balance of push and care that was achieved within their Homeplace allowed them to speak freely with one another. Mrs. Hooks shared,

> I think she would say that I gave her a good balance of pushing her when she needed, while also caring for her those moments that she needed. It would be the close the door and say, "Alright, Black to Black, life is hard, and yet we've got to do this right?"

In their Homeplace, Leigh and Mrs. Hooks had the freedom to speak straightforwardly with one another. Mrs. Hooks's overall goal was to sustain Homeplace with Leigh. She shared,

> I would hope she would say she felt a sense of home or just safety, that she could just be Leigh and didn't have to be Leigh who is this or Leigh who is that... You know all the titles that a lot of times we as Black women have to hold. We can't ever just be. We always have to be something else with our name. So I would hope that she felt she could just be Leigh and simply that.

The freedom to "just be Leigh" through the Homeplace she shared with Mrs. Hooks allowed Leigh to let a guard down that had been up most of her life. Leigh described how the guard that she had up became a sense of protection for her when she was growing up in a predominately white space. Leigh explained,

> I think I protected myself a lot in high school from those things. I think it was the reverse of her being like, "You can take some of those guards down and make those mistakes and do all the things…"

Their shared intersectional identities, recognizing all that Black women "had to hold," and comfort with one another destroyed walls that Leigh built for protection. Hence, both women were allowed to be straightforward and direct with one another about issues they experienced as Black women, also demonstrating boldness that transpired in their relationship.

Case IV: Ashanti and Ms. Shakur

Homeplace between Ashanti and Ms. Shakur blossomed following their return to the school building when COVID-19 pandemic restrictions began to lift. Ashanti shared that she always just assumed that Ms. Shakur was her assigned school counselor. She said, "I swear I had a counselor that was just like her my freshman year. But she swear she wasn't my counselor freshman year." To her delight, Ms. Shakur became her school counselor her sophomore year, and the Homeplace they shared felt strong from the beginning. Ashanti shared, "I felt comfortable coming to her with a lot of conversations, a lot of issues and problems I was facing. So, it was nice. It was like nice to have a piece of home at school." For Ashanti, Ms. Shakur was home, and she co-created Homeplace with her school counselor as she pursued self-discovery and was "noticed for good."

A Journey Towards Self-Discovery

Ashanti discussed how experiencing Homeplace with Ms. Shakur helped her discover her identity as a person. She shared, "I want to say like, knowledgeable because I would always learn something from her. I ask a lot of questions and, she was like, 'It's good you're not afraid to ask questions.'" By welcoming her curiosity into their Homeplace, Ms. Shakur offered Ashanti the validation she needed as she discovered more about herself, fostering her boldness. Ashanti shared, "Nobody knows everything. You should always want to be somewhat dumb in a sense, so you can learn more and better yourself in some way. And she helped me discover that." The

Homeplace she experienced in her relationship with Ms. Shakur, was what made the relationship so different from her connection with other school counselors. Ashanti shared, “You know, most school counselors, they'll just only care about your grades and stuff and that's it, but it was more than that. She wanted me to learn more about myself... The more I could.” The Homeplace they experience made Ms. Shakur different, because she recognized Ashanti’s desire to learn and discovered ways to increase her access to opportunities that matched her personal strengths. Ms. Shakur used her influence as a school counselor to both expand Ashanti’s self-awareness and increase access to opportunities for Ashanti.

School Counselor’s Influence

Homeplace developed within their relationship as Ms. Shakur addressed Ashanti’s desire to expand her self-knowledge and skills. She shared, “She's somebody that's willing to learn, and I was able to pour that into her.” Ms. Shakur discussed how these conversations with Ashanti would usually go, sharing, “It could just be something like, ‘Hey, I want to learn more. So, what classes do you think I should take my senior year.?’” In turn, Ms. Shakur described how she would offer Ashanti feedback and suggestions about the steps she could take to learn more. She shared, “Before she graduated, I suggested, ‘Hey, you have a powerful voice, you should take a public speaking class.’” As Homeplace was created between them, Ashanti began to trust the recommendations Ms. Shakur offered and applied them in her life. Ashanti recalled,

> She was like, “I think you should try...[it].” It wasn't like she was forcing me, but she was presenting me with new opportunities… She was like, “I think you should try this,” or “I think you would be good at this.”

Ashanti also acknowledged that by encouraging Ashanti to build upon her strengths and try new things, Ms. Shakur helped her develop her Womanist identity by stepping outside of her comfort

zone and into her unique boldness. Ashanti explained, “I wanted to try new things like put myself outside my comfort zone.” The Homeplace between them motivated Ashanti to push beyond the limits she internalized about her abilities and talents.

Ms. Shakur also described how she used her influence as a Black woman school counselor to advocate for Ashanti when she was wrongfully suspended from school. Although uncertain, Ms. Shakur believed the school expulsion could have been influenced by racial bias. She explained, “During the time I did advocate for Ashanti. I'm like, ‘Look, she's a good student. She don't need to be suspended.’ Not trying to say this is stupid because it's safety, but at the same time I'm about equality.” Although Ashanti did receive out of school suspension for the offense, Homeplace was strengthened because of how Ms. Shakur advocated for Ashanti and tried to protect her from the inequity she experienced at school.

“Noticed for Good”

Ms. Shakur described how she intentionally invested in developing the Homeplace she shared in her relationship with Ashanti. She shared, “Both of our birthdays are in October, so it's all about building rapport with students. It could just be the smallest things like, ‘Oh my gosh, you're an October baby? Me too.’ The underlying rapport established between the two of them allowed Ms. Shakur to pour into Ashanti on a deeper level and was the beginning of the Homeplace they experienced throughout Ashanti’s high school career. Ms. Shakur explained, “So it's just building that relationship with one another and understanding that like, ‘Hey, I'm trying to pour into you what I didn't have as a child,’ because we had a lot of similarities.” Ms. Shakur recognized similarities between what Ashanti was experiencing as a high school student and her own childhood experiences. For example, they both alluded to overcoming adversities related to feeling excluded due to one or more of their identities during childhood. Likewise,

Ashanti described how their shared racial identities contributed to the Homeplace she experienced with Ms. Shakur in a way that she had not experienced with school counselors from a different racial background. Ashanti expressed,

> It was because she could relate more than a white school counselor could relate on a racial level, like, “Oh, I feel this way.” With a white school counselor, they don't really share the same struggles that you would face, that me as a Black woman would face. So it was nice… sometimes I'll ask her like, “Am I tripping?” She'd be like, “No, you're fine.” “Okay. Just gotta make sure.”

For Ashanti, their shared struggles allowed her to experience a mutual understanding in their Homeplace. The mutual understanding between them enhanced trust and comfort in their relationship. Ms. Shakur discussed how she extended the invitation for Ashanti to lower her guard in their Homeplace to freely and boldly discuss certain topics that may have been off limits to Ashanti in other spaces. Ms. Shakur explained, “So just to see her let that guard down, it was just like, ‘Okay, something has to give or obviously this has been bothering you, so let's just go ahead and get it out.’” This invitation to “go deeper” in their Homeplace moved Ashanti to tears as she recalled it.

Through tears and a trembling voice, Ashanti described what it was like to experience Homeplace with Ms. Shakur. She shared, “It was safe. Like it was comforting. I’m gonna cry.” Tears streaked her cheeks as Ashanti discussed her awareness of negative stereotypes associated with Black girlhood. She shared,

> I feel like it was definitely like a couple times when I was like, looked at differently by teachers because of my race, like white teachers because of my race or because I was a Black female at that, because I guess they see us as intimidating.

However, Ashanti emphasized that Ms. Shakur rejected these stereotypical expectations of Ashanti's behavior:

> Because, you know, sometimes they see you and they be like, "Oh, you're being fast," but they notice you for the wrong reasons, or they see you for the wrong reasons, and she saw me for something good, and it felt good.

Being noticed for good was something that Ashanti rarely experienced with other adults, but it became an essential component of the Homeplace she shared with Ms. Shakur. Ashanti recalled how love was experienced in her Homeplace with Ms. Shakur. Ashanti shared, "It was in her actions and words. It wasn't like she physically had to tell me like, 'Oh, I love you,' it was in everything that she did...". In their Homeplace, they emboldened one another and rejected stereotypical expectations and enjoyed freedom and joy in their relationship. Ashanti described the joy she experienced when Ms. Shakur went running with her to prepare for military basic training. She recalled that memory, saying,

> We went to the park to run because it was right before I was about to ship off for basic training. We got to run, and it was nice. We got to run, and she was like, "I'm a lil' out of shape." I was like running past her. She was like, "Go, leave me." It was nice.

Ms. Shakur also discussed Ashanti joining the military when she described how she experienced joy in their relationship. She shared, "And then to see her, when she came from basic training in that Army uniform, I was like, 'Aw, my little baby.' It's just joy to see her making an impact." Ashanti and Ms. Shakur represented how the joy they experienced within their Homeplace surpassed high school graduation.

Case V: Myrtle and Dr. Walker

The Homeplace between Myrtle and Dr. Walker developed rapidly once they realized they were both new to the high school. Dr. Walker had transferred her from her school counselor role at another school, and Myrtle was starting her freshmen year. Dr. Walker described their shared unfamiliarity with the school as a major connecting force at the beginning of their relationship. Dr. Walker recalled, "I was a new school counselor there and she was also a freshman. So, we were starting… we always say we started our journey together literally in high school." This shared experience was formative for the pair and set a strong foundation for the Homeplace that would be created between them.

"I Feel like We Think the Same Sometimes"

Myrtle described how their similarities helped them develop Homeplace in the relationship she had with Dr. Walker during high school. She said, "We both... it's hard to explain. We act similar. I don't know... we act similar. [There are] certain things that we react to. Like we be like, 'Did you just see that?'" Beyond their shared personality traits, Myrtle discussed overlaps in their upbringing that she believed helped to strengthen the Homeplace between them. She shared, "I think she said that we both we have stepdads. So, she knows [what it is like] not really having a father figure in our lives." Myrtle also described the joy that was experienced between them when they thought the same thoughts:

> "I feel like we think the same sometimes because like, if we see something out of the ordinary and nobody else will catch it, we both will catch it and we'll be like, "I know you saw that." And she'll be like "Giiiiirl!"

Within their Homeplace Myrtle and Dr. Walker shared a mutual understanding that transcended words.

The Homeplace experienced between Dr. Walker and Myrtle was so special for Myrtle, because it was rooted in similarities and an unspoken understanding that validated Myrtle's innate boldness. Myrtle shared, "Like it's certain... our demeanor, I guess. Her demeanor is strong. She comes off as like... I don't know, she's nice. And then it's like, 'Okay, but don't mess with me.' That's how I get." For Myrtle, the similarities she shared Dr. Walker was unlike anything she had experienced before in school. Myrtle explained,

> It was like a breath of fresh air for me to be like, "Okay, I have a Black counselor, so if I do need something or if I do need to talk to somebody about something that nobody else can relate to, I know I got her."

Knowing that Dr. Walker would be able to relate to her was comforting for Myrtle. She shared,

> I say power because it's certain things that I would go through, and she would say things and I'd be like, "Where did that even come from? How did you know to form those words to even make me feel better?"

Likewise, Dr. Walker described how Myrtle reminded her of herself.

In her interview, Dr. Walker shared, "Because that girl is something. I tell her all the time; she reminds me so much of myself." She also described how their similar personalities and mutual understanding positioned her to know how to respond to Myrtle's emotional needs,

> So, for her to sit and have a counseling session, that wasn't what was going to happen because she's going to crack jokes, she's going to distract me, and I'm easily distracted. So, we would get out and go walk, and we would walk around the building.

The shared experiences and mutual understanding they experienced in their Homeplace permitted Dr. Walker to offer Myrtle holistic care in their relationship, with a focus on attending to Myrtle's mental health.

Reciprocal Relationship: "I'm Still Here"

As Homeplace was strengthened in their relationship, Myrtle's self-confidence also grew. Dr. Walker shared, "…she started to find and recognize that there was a Homeplace, there was a space for her in this building, and seeing her head come up." Homeplace was created through a shared sense of trust in their relationship. Myrtle explained that she usually struggled to trust people, so the trust that she shared with her school counselor surprised her. She shared, "…I don't trust people. I don't. I don't trust people. I don't trust people. So, it's just like, why did my heart trust you?" The risk that her heart took in trusting Dr. Walker contributed to the Homeplace that was created with her school counselor. Myrtle disclosed her challenges with mental health during high school and how she trusted Dr. Walker to support her through this. Myrtle explained,

> I trust her because it's certain things she told me when I was going through a really, really dark time…, "Okay. Let me stay another day. Let me get through this day. Because just because today is a bad day doesn't mean tomorrow will be a bad day." Even though other teachers were worried about me too and stuff like that, she really cared and she was like, "If something happens to you, I'm going to fall out on this ground and I will not be able to get back up." And that's what really stuck with me because it's just like I didn't know people actually cared for me like that… So that's why I trust her so much, because I'm still here.

Homeplace was developed through their reciprocal love and trust for one another, as Dr. Walker also experienced freedom in their relationship.

Dr. Walker did not take the vulnerability that Myrtle shared with her for granted. She described what it was like for her as a school counselor to see Myrtle let her guard down to trust

her. Specifically, Dr. Walker shared what it felt like as a school counselor to be able to be her true self and to own every aspect of her identity as a Black woman in her relationship with Myrtle. Dr. Walker explained,

> It was great for me to see again as a school counselor, but then me as a person, I was one of very few Black women in that space as well. So, it was also a safe space for me to be my authentic self because we talk in the profession about kids code-switching and having to be an authentic version of themselves to come into a white majority space. And I was having to do the same thing. I couldn't be me fully. My office was that only space in which I could be myself. And so welcoming my space for other people to be themselves, too, was just, like, heartwarming, and it was huge... and I was like, this is what I'm here for. If I'm only here for these ten little Black girls, then so be it. And so that's how I started to see it. If this is the difference that I make in my career as a school counselor in my work in this particular building, then I've done enough.

Overall, Dr. Walker's quote shows how she too benefited from the freedom to just be herself that was created Homeplace with Myrtle. As Myrtle was becoming bolder, Dr. Walker's sense of boldness was simultaneously being nurtured by their Homeplace.

Love and Loyalty

Myrtle described a deep loyalty towards Dr. Walker that she experienced within the Homeplace she created with her former school counselor. When describing their bond, Myrtle said, "It's a bond that I would literally have to... if she needed me in that type of situation, oh I'm 100% there. Anything. Hands down… Ten. Toes. Down. She knows that too." She described a time when she overheard someone speaking negatively about Dr. Walker. Myrtle shared, "I said, 'That lady did nothing to you but try to help you.' And that's when I got defensive because you're

not going to sit here and talk about my Dr. Walker. Absolutely not. Not in front of me." Myrtle's love for Dr. Walker was expressed through her loyalty and willingness to boldly defend her former school counselor. Myrtle also described what it was like to experience a reciprocated loyalty from Dr. Walker when she had her back and spoke out against a microaggression she experienced at school:

> It's a deep bond for me. It's very strong because she's had my back in many situations like against racial things. She was right there like, "No, you're not going to talk to her like that. Don't touch her hair." Stuff like that. She an amazing person. She's one of a kind. I never met nobody like her before. Her heart is too pure.

Dr. Walker's actions during this moment communicated her loyalty to Myrtle. Indeed, Dr. Walker described how she explicitly told Myrtle that she loved her to affirm her worth. She shared,

> I would tell her and I said, "If no one else tells you today, you know that I love you. If no one else tells you this week, you know that I care about you." I knew she needed to hear that there were people who loved her. There were people who appreciated her for as she was, just as she was, expecting absolutely nothing.

For Dr. Walker it was important that Myrtle experienced an unconditional love within their Homeplace, especially considering the struggles Myrtle encountered as a Black girl.

In addition to unconditional love, Dr. Walker provided a balance of tough love and nurturance to Myrtle. Myrtle explained,

> Sometimes she'll tell me when I'm wrong, that's what she will do. And I hate that because I'm like, "No, you're supposed to agree with me every time." That is good though,

> because you do need somebody to tell you, “No, you shouldn't have did that. Stay on your P's and Q's.”

Through tough love, Dr. Walker held Myrtle accountable for her actions. The balance of tough of love and nurturance strengthened the Homeplace they experienced together. Myrtle discussed how Dr. Walker provided the love and care she needed when she was going through a difficult loss. She shared,

> There was one time, actually, I'll never forget. It was one time I came in her office crying. It was about something, but she took off my glasses. I wore glasses at the time, but she took off my glasses and just gave me a hug. Didn't even say anything… That's just a certain love that's like, oh my gosh. She actually cares about me. Most people don't do that. They're not going to take your glasses off and just hug you. Most people don't do that. They'll just grab you a tissue and keep on talking, but she actually took the time to really just nurture.

Dr. Walker also discussed how the love between she and Myrtle that was shared within their Homeplace transcended the walls of the school building. She shared,

> Love is not just opening up your office, but love is recognizing the things that they are saying without them saying it, knowing what they need before them having to tell you what they need… So, when I think about love, I think about that because wherever I am, that’s where love is.

The love they shared in their Homeplace was also accompanied by joy and laughter in their relationship. Myrtle described how they always put a positive spin to things. She explained,

> She's hilarious. But every little thing that I go through, we have to put a spin on it sometimes. I could be sad, walking to the school, and she'll light up my day…It was one time I got my hair done. She was like, "Okay, Megan the Stallion!" I said, "What girl?"

Because of the Homeplace they had created with one another, Dr. Walker knew just what to say to brighten Myrtle's day. Dr. Walker also described the laughter and humor she shared with Myrtle, alongside discussing the joy of seeing her growing bolder and becoming her own person. She shared,

> I think about joy, I can't help but to think about smiles and laughter. We have a similar sense of humor, which is funny and just very matter of fact, but I think about joy. Her laugh is infectious. But when I think about joy too, like for me as a school counselor or as a person who cares about her, a person who loves her... the joy that I feel is watching her become her own person. Like there is no greater joy than me... and I always tell her all the time, "I feel privileged to have been a part of this with her."

For Dr. Walker, the joy she experienced within their Homeplace was simple. Through tears and a smile that spanned across her face, Dr. Walker said without hesitation, "This girl, I'm telling you about my girl... I might tear up again [gets teary eyed], was the one that worked with my administrators to plan a lunch for me. So, again when I think about joy, it's her." For Dr. Walker, joy was Myrtle.

School Counselor's Advocacy

Dr. Walker discussed how she used her power and influence as a school counselor to support Myrtle at school. She shared, "If I see it, I'm going to say something about it, because then I see that's me stepping into that space for her, me using my privilege. I might not have much in that space, but I know that I'm an adult." The Homeplace they shared coupled with Dr.

Walker's knowledge of institutional barriers prevalent within schools informed how she advocated for Myrtle. She shared,

> I knew that we were both existing within a system that was not built that way. That she was not seeing herself reflected anywhere else in that building. That it was going to be much easier for a teacher in that space to write her up for a discipline infraction than to recommend her for an Advanced Placement course, even though she's a bright girl, they will see her intelligence as being assertive, and that is what threatens people.

Dr. Walker's personal experience as one of the only Black educators at their school and her awareness of master narratives associated with Black girls, shaped how she advocated for Myrtle and how she used her words to affirm and express unconditional love to Myrtle.

Within their Homeplace, Dr. Walker used her cultural knowledge and influence as a school leader to enhance Myrtle's cultural capital and her ability to advocate for herself. For Black people, cultural capital refers to the sense of group collectiveness that serves as a resource for individual and group advancement (Franklin, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Dr. Walker shared, "I feel like the biggest way for me to be an advocate is, yes, I can speak on your behalf, but I also have to prepare you to do these things yourself, but in a manner that you won't get yourself in trouble." Myrtle responded to what it felt like knowing Dr. Walker used her power to advocate on Myrtle's behalf. For example, Myrtle described a time when she experienced discrimination in class and Dr. Walker, or "Doc" as she affectionately referred to her, "had [her] back." Myrtle shared,

> So, when she took me out the class, Doc was at the end of the hallway and she was just talking to me. I was like, "No, you don't understand. This lady just called me a name." And so she was like, "The school's going to deal with it. Just go in there. Don't say

> nothing. Do your work. Don't even look at her…". So, I walk back in that classroom, sat down and stared right at that lady, because what you gonna do? Doc's on my side!

With Doc on her side, Myrtle felt like she could accomplish just about anything. She also shared how her confidence was boosted through the Homeplace she experienced with Dr. Walker. Myrtle explained, "She was the only person that's like, 'No, it's okay to speak up because why did that girl do that or why did he do that?'" As Dr. Walker utilized her influence to advocate for Myrtle, Homeplace was sustained, and Myrtle developed the strength and boldness to advocate for herself.

"Collective Problem Solving"

Finally, Homeplace was strengthened through Dr. Walker's intentional inclusion of Myrtle's voice in decisions that could impact her life trajectory. Dr. Walker shared, "And I said, 'Now how are we going to handle this?' I said, 'Because there's things that I can do, but there's also things I want you to do.'" This explicit invitation for Myrtle to be a part of the decision about the steps they would take following the racist incident Myrtle experienced in class encouraged collaboration between them. Dr. Walker also discussed how she partnered with Myrtle's mother to support her. Dr. Walker shared,

> Sometimes I'd call her mom up on the phone too, and I'm like, "Let's get your mom on speaker and we can figure out how best to handle this." And we would problem solve together. Sometimes the two of us, or the three of us because unfortunately there were many instances of that. Because, again, the space that we were in, and so her mom would have to step in because I was like... I know her mom by first name, and I'd be like, "[Zora], I can't do this from this angle, but I'm going to tell you what you can do."

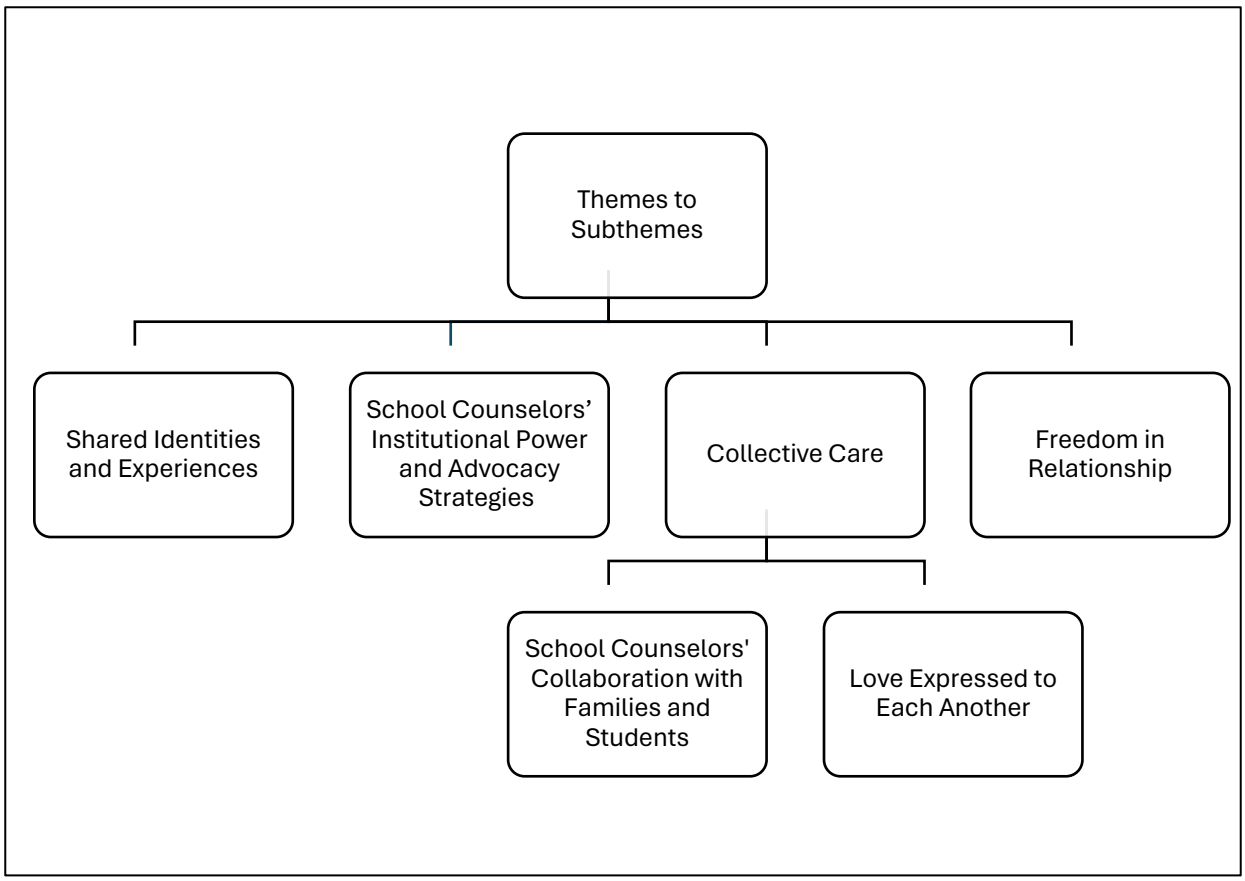
The Homeplace that was experienced between Dr. Walker, Myrtle, and Zora catapulted collective problem solving, which allowed Dr. Walker to support her student and family as they navigated a predominately white school where Myrtle had endured her share of discrimination.

Cross-Case Analysis

A cross-case analysis was conducted to identify common themes across the five cases. As noted in Chapter Three, a multiple case study design in qualitative research allows for greater opportunities to identify both commonalities and differences across several cases that are representative of the phenomenon being studied (Borman et al., 2012). The cross-case analysis was framed through the perspective of a Womanist theoretical framework, where principles of Womanism and Homeplace were used as the lens to explore the experiences of the Black women who participated in this study.

Four overarching themes emerged from the data analysis process. These themes included: *Shared Identities and Experiences*, *School Counselors' Institutional Power and Advocacy Strategies, Collective Care*, and *Freedom in Relationship*. One theme, *Collective Care*, comprised of subthemes that helped illustrate the complexities revealed through the data. The subthemes for *Collective Care* are *Connection with Family* and *Expressing Love for Each Other*. These subthemes describe the different ways that collective care presented itself throughout their relationship. Figure 1 illustrates each emergent theme and subtheme. Each theme will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Figure 1
Emergent Themes to Subthemes



Theme I: Shared Identities and Experiences: "It's just different when you're talking to a mirror"

The first theme detailed how Homeplace was formed and strengthened through commonalities, shared identities, cultural connections, and the unspoken or mutual understanding that resulted from the shared experiences between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. All ten co-researchers (formers students and school counselors) discussed how the similarities and commonalities they shared increased the feeling of Homeplace they experienced within their relationships. For example, Dr. Jacobs used the metaphor "talking to a mirror" to demonstrate how their shared identities and cultural connection

strengthened the feeling of Homeplace with Moné. She shared, "…it's just different when you're talking to a mirror and you're looking at the younger version of yourself…". Specifically, all co-researchers discussed how shared racial and gender identities allowed them to understand some of the challenges the other person could be experiencing as a Black woman with multiple intersecting marginalized identities.

In addition to their racial and gender identity, some co-researchers discussed how similar experiences during their childhood (e.g., grief) increased how Homeplace was felt between them, because they could empathize with one another and offer meaningful support. Four cases illustrated this. Myrtle and Dr. Jacobs, for example, had similar family structures. Myrtle felt that Dr. Jacobs could relate to her about what it was like to have a stepfather and to not have a biological father present in their lives. Mrs. Morrison recalled how her own experiences as a high achieving Black girl who attended TU, a PWI, shaped how Homeplace was experienced with Alexis. As Alexis experienced identical challenges in her advanced level classes and when she shared her dreams of attending TU with people who were unsupportive, Mrs. Morrison could relate to these experiences, which prompted her to provide support by explicitly buffering the negative feedback that Alexis received. An example of her support was illustrated when Alexis noted, "I wasn't hesitant to say that I wanted to go to TU because someone had acknowledged me and not dismissed." Dr. Jacobs described how her experiences with grief as an adolescent shaped how she cared for Moné through her grief. In particular, she was adamant about creating a space of comfort for Moné, which made Moné feel as though she "was not alone." Lastly, the shared struggles that Ashanti and Ms. Shakur experienced during their childhoods promoted Homeplace in their relationship. Given that they both experienced moments when they felt unseen and unheard because of one or more their identities during childhood, Ashanti felt more

comfortable seeking care from Ms. Shakur over someone who did not share these experiences with her. For these co-researchers, Homeplace was created through their sameness and was sustained through the deep connection that was nurtured because of their similarities. In turn, this made the former students feel seen and supported, versus isolated and withdrawn.

Theme II: School Counselors' Institutional Power and Advocacy Strategies

The second theme relates to how school counselors' knowledge of systemic and institutional issues positioned them to use their institutional power and advocate on behalf of their students. Institutional power refers to the power possessed by leaders to create and influence rules and policies (Moon, 2019). Homeplace was created as school counselors addressed the systemic barriers that were present, and their students recognized what this meant to them, as evidence by words and phrases such as, "Doc's on my side," "She made sure were all straight," and "[She] had my back."

First, school counselor co-researchers discussed how they utilized their institutional power and advocacy strategies to combat school policy and practices that created an inequitable learning environment for their students. For example, Dr. Jacobs used her institutional power by standing before the school board to advocate for equitable policies that would eliminate barriers to admission into advanced level courses for Moné and other Black students. As such, Dr. Jacobs hoped that she was "… protecting them from policy that [didn't] have their best interest." Similarly, Mrs. Morrison utilized her institutional power by increasing Alexis's access to advanced courses that Black students had historically been denied access to at their school. Mrs. Morrison advocated for systemic change, but she also used her institutional power to provide Alexis with the cultural capital and knowledge she needed to be academically successful in these predominately white spaces. This is illustrated in the following quote by Mrs. Morrison: "I knew

that was important for me to be able to sit down and make sure that her application looked beautiful, because I wanted her to be a part of those spaces."

In addition to addressing the academic-related experiences of their students, the school counselor co-researchers used their institutional power to ensure that their students were not impacted by harsh discipline practices that disproportionately impacts Black students. This is illustrated when Dr. Walker shared, "If I see it, I'm going to say something about it, because then I see that's me stepping into that space for her, me using my privilege. I might not have much in that space, but I know that I'm an adult." As example, Dr. Walker advocated for Myrtle when she experienced unfair treatment in class that Myrtle believed was racially motivated. Dr. Walker quickly reported to the classroom and reassured her that her feelings were valid and that she was addressing the situation. However, she was also adamant about ensuring that Myrtle was well-prepared to advocate for herself when faced with challenges related to her behavior in school: "I feel like the biggest way for me to be an advocate is, yes, I can speak on your behalf, but I also have to prepare you to do these things yourself…" (Dr. Walker). In a similar vein, Ms. Shakur used her institutional power to speak up for Ashanti following a school expulsion that could have been motivated by racism. Ms. Shakur offered, "During [that] time I did advocate for Ashanti. I'm like, "Look, she's a good student. She don't need to be suspended."

Their former students benefitted from the ways in which the school counselors used their institutional power to advocate on their behalf. Aligned with the school counselors' efforts to improve the learning environment for their Black girl students, Mrs. Morrison discussed her commitment to increase access to opportunities to enroll in advanced level courses. Mrs. Morrison shared, "I'm like, no, Alexis can apply for one of these and we're not going to allow just the people who [are white]." Alexis discussed how Mrs. Morrison introduced her to aspects

of Black collegiate culture that was would be available to her at TU. Mrs. Morrison's use of institutional power helped to boost Alexis's belief that she could accomplish her dreams no matter what institutional or systemic barriers stood in her way. For Moné, Dr. Jacobs also eliminated barriers that could have prevented her from reaching her academic goals, including informing her of opportunities like specialty schools that aligned with her interests and strengths. Hence, Moné discussed how this helped her increase her self-confidence and fostered her belief that she could achieve her dreams. Moné shared, "I know that I'm a strong woman… I know that I didn't get here by myself." Likewise, Ashanti discussed her reaction to Ms. Shakur's advocacy that helped Ashanti see that she was capable of stepping outside of her comfort zone and into her boldness: "I wanted to try new things like put myself outside my comfort zone." Together, these experiences show that the advocacy displayed by the school counselors led their former students to feel empowered, confident, and steadfast in their pursuit of their goals and dreams.

Regarding advocacy in relation to discipline specific issues, Myrtle felt empowered when Dr. Walker used her institutional power to advocate for her. As she recalled an incident when she experienced discrimination in class, Myrtle's account suggested that she had confidence in Dr. Walker's promise to "have her back," which led her to walk confidently back into the classroom that once felt unsafe because she knew "Doc was on her side." Like other students, her confidence was bolstered by the Homeplace created by her school counselor. As a result of Dr. Walker's advocacy, Myrtle avoided punitive disciplinary consequences because of the bias exhibited by her teacher, while also fostering their co-developed Homeplace.

Theme III: Collective Care

The third theme, *Collective Care*, relates to how school counselors and students expressed care to one another in their relationship. This theme was present across all five cases.

Collectivism places greater importance on the group's well-being versus one's own personal goals (Stamps et al., 2021). To capture the differences in how collective care presented itself across cases, this theme is comprised of two subthemes: *School Counselors' Collaboration with Families and Students*, as well as *Love for Each Other*.

School Counselors' Collaboration with Families and Students

This subtheme highlights the partnerships that developed across relationships and promoted Homeplace between school counselors, students, and families. Dr. Jacobs and Mrs. Morrison discussed how they viewed their former students as equal partners in their relationships. Dr. Jacobs shared, "I know it's a discourse like, 'Oh, I'm not one of your little friends,' but I feel like I treated them like an equal of sorts, you know?" Homeplace was established as Dr. Jacobs respected and valued Moné's contributions to their relationship. Likewise, Mrs. Morrison discussed that in their Homeplace, she invited Alexis into discussions as the "expert" of her own life. These two examples show how the equal partnership established between the school counselor and student cultivated a student-centered and -driven environment within their relationship.

Dr. Jacob's also developed a close relationship with Alexis's family that strengthened the Homeplace between them. Specifically, Dr. Walker described how collaboration with Myrtle's mom, Zora, allowed them to collectively tackle institutional problems from various angles. As such, this created an interconnected network of support for Myrtle, in which her two advocates, her mother and Dr. Walker, were able to approach challenges Myrtle faced from different supportive angles. The close relationship between Mrs. Hooks and Leigh's mother also allowed her to reinforce healthy coping strategies to create consistency between home and school while supporting Leigh's mental health. Leigh recognized Mrs. Hooks efforts, as Leigh emphasized

that "…[Her] mother having [Mrs. Hooks] on speed dial]" meant that her mental health needs would be consistently cared for at home and at school without dismissal. Partnering with the students' families strengthened the support that was provided to the Black girls. Aligned with the idea of Homeplace, such efforts ultimately the need for collective care to overcome adversity.

Love Expressed to Each Other

In addition to working alongside families and partnering with students, Homeplace was constructed as collective care and expressed through the ways in which school counselors and former students conveyed their love for one another. Throughout the interview, tears flowed down Moné's cheeks as she recalled the impact that Dr. Jacobs had on her life in high school. The love that Moné experienced with Dr. Jacobs was sometimes overwhelming for her. She described what these feelings were like at her graduation. Leigh shared, "I saw Dr. Jacobs, she hugged me, and I started bawling." The love that Leigh experienced in her Homeplace was conveyed through Mrs. Hooks having made herself available to Leigh during difficult times. Even if Mrs. Hooks was busy, she never made Leigh feel unseen.

The love that was shared in the Homeplace between Myrtle and Dr. Jacobs was expressed through a reciprocal loyalty for one another. Dr. Jacobs always had Myrtle's back, so she felt compelled to stand up for her school counselor when she overheard someone speaking negatively about her. When describing her loyalty to Dr. Jacobs, Myrtle emphasized, "…Ten. Toes. Down. She knows that too." Within their Homeplace, Myrtle and Dr. Jacobs expressed love through supporting and being there for one another. Likewise, Ashanti knew Ms. Shakur loved her because of her actions. She didn't have to say it explicitly, but she felt it when she was "noticed for good."

Othermothering was another way that school counselors expressed love and care to their students in their Homeplaces. Othermothering is a concept that is closely related to Womanism. Othermothers are defined as Black "women who assist blood-mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities" (Collins, 1990, p. 119). Othermothering goes beyond mentoring or traditional educator duties or expectations to provide Black children with holistic care grounded in a strong relationship, love, nurturance, and empowerment of Black students to reach their fullest potential (Guiffrida, 2005). The nurturance and care that Dr. Jacobs provided Moné as she navigated difficult emotions related to grief is an example of how love was demonstrated through othermothering within their Homeplace. This is illustrated in Moné's description of the all-day access she had to Dr. Jacobs. She shared, "She was the first person I went to, and I stayed in her room. I stayed in her office all day and she helped me through a lot." Othermothering was also observed in how Dr. Walker and Mrs. Hooks provided a balance of tough love and nurturance to Myrtle and Leigh when they needed it most. Through this balance achieved within their Homeplace, Mrs. Hooks was able to support Leigh during moments of heightened anxiety and Dr. Walker held Myrtle accountable for her actions even as she battled with mental health concerns.

Theme IV: Freedom in Relationship: "Letting my Guard Down"

The final theme that emerged through data analysis was the feeling of freedom that was felt by co-researchers in the Homeplace experienced between former students and school counselors. This freedom was expressed as co-researchers discovered they were able to express authenticity in their relationship. Authenticity in the relationship permitted co-researchers to speak freely between each other without any pressure to code-switch, and it created a space where the students received support that they may not have otherwise accessed.

First, racial code-switching refers to how individuals from minoritized racial communities change or switch behaviors and language patterns to avoid confirming negative stereotypes that might be associated with their group (Johnson et al., 2022). Mrs. Morrison and Dr. Walker expressed how beneficial it was for them as Black women to experience this freedom in the Homeplace they experienced with their former students. Dr. Jacobs expressed, "It was also a safe space for me to be my authentic self…" The importance of this space was amplified by their shared experiences of many of the same oppressions due to the intersectionality of their identities in spaces where white people and their concerns were often centered and prioritized. Moné enjoyed that she did need not have to "dial back" any aspects of her identity when she was around Dr. Jacobs as this allowed her to boldly embrace her authenticity. Similarly, Mrs. Hooks highlighted how their shared, intersectional identities as Black women allowed her to have unfiltered conversations with Leigh about navigating the world as a Black woman. This allowed Mrs. Hooks to say things like, "Alright, Black to Black, life is hard, and yet we've got to do this right?" Away from the stressors that existed in the larger society, these women and their former students were able to be their true selves in the Homeplace they created together. In addition to creating a space for their previous students to receive critical support, the ability to be authentic provided a sense of connection and affirmation for Black women school counselors and them how important it was for them to model authenticity to their former students.

As co-researchers expressed authenticity with one another, they began to experience some of the benefits of being their authentic selves in their student and school counselor relationships. These benefits included comfort, boldness, and trust. All five of the former student co-researchers discussed what it was like to experience comfort in their relationships with their former school counselors. For example, Moné shared, "I felt at ease. I felt comfortable." This

was also illustrated by Ashanti during her interview. She shared, “I felt comfortable coming to her with a lot of conversations, a lot of issues and problems I was facing.” The comfort that former students experienced with their former school counselors did not occur by happenstance. School counselors discussed how they intentionally strove to create an environment where their students could be their authentic selves and experience comfort in their relationship. For example, Mrs. Hooks shared, “I would hope she would say she felt a sense of home or just safety, that she could just be Leigh and didn't have to be Leigh who is this or Leigh who is that.”

Another benefit of the authenticity and freedom experienced in the relationship between Black adolescent girl and Black women school counselor pairs was trust. While there are similarities between trust and comfort, trust emphasizes the vulnerability that was needed to share aspects of oneself and the faith in the other person that what was shared would be honored. This level of trust created an environment for students to discuss mental health concerns and to receive the support they needed to overcome these struggles. For example, Myrtle shared, “So that's why I trust her so much, because I'm still here.” The trust between them made room for vulnerability to exist and allowed Myrtle to get the support she needed when she experienced thoughts of harming herself. Likewise, Moné described how she trusted her school counselor Dr. Jacobs enough to share parts of her identity as a gay woman that she was hesitant to share with other people. Moné shared, “So, when I, when I was in high school, you know, that was at a time where, you know, I was coming out or I wasn't out… I could go to Dr. Jacobs about anything.” The trust established in their relationship provided a safe space for Moné to openly discuss her sexuality and to navigate the emotions that accompanied coming out to peers and family.

Finally, another aspect of freedom that was experienced in the relationship between former students and school counselors is joy. Each co-researcher described what it was like to

experience their own version of joy with the other person. All the student co-researchers described unique struggles they navigated alongside their school counselors. Their school counselors provided a space to address these challenges. Amid the adversity, joy resided in their relationships. Joy was a respite for students and school counselors, and the relationship they had allowed it to co-exist with all the other emotions they experienced together. For Moné and Ashanti joy was embodied in the way their school counselors supported their extracurricular activities. Dr. Jacobs attended Moné's basketball games and Ms. Shakur trained with Ashanti to prepare for the military. Moné shared, "We got to run, and it was nice." This illustrates joy for the co-researchers because they were celebrated by their school counselor during an exciting time in their lives. Dr. Jacobs described what joy was like with Myrtle. She shared, "This girl, I'm telling you about my girl… when I think about joy, it's her." Witnessing Myrtle's growth throughout high school was joy for Dr. Jacobs.

Overall, the freedom within the Homeplace that was created across all cases offered co-researchers a space where all their emotions were welcome to co-exist. No emotions were off limits and co-researchers did not have to minimize the feelings they experienced. Such emotions included anxiety, frustration, and even anger in response to racial injustices. When describing the grief she experienced, Moné shared, "....I remember just crying so much." Pain was welcome in the Homeplace she shared with Dr. Walker. However, positive emotions were also felt and valued, as the previous students and counselors recalled moments of laughter and joy. Mrs. Morrison illustrated this by sharing, "You can laugh and let your hair down in this space…" Laughter was welcome in the Homeplace she shared with Alexis.

Summary

Utilizing an in-depth case study analysis, this study explored the creation of Homeplace between five dyads of Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. Womanism was the theoretical framework through which the findings of this study were analyzed. This framework centers the unique experiences, contributions, concerns, and conditions of Black womanhood (Walker, 1983). Core tenets of Womanism include be womanish, love oneself, love others, and pursue empowerment (Walker, 1983). Components of Womanism were revealed throughout the findings of this study and will be discussed in the next chapter.

The findings of this study exposed the experiences and qualities that were present within and across these relationships as they created Homeplace throughout the former students' high school tenure. This study also revealed the perceived benefits of Homeplace in relationships for co-researchers. Shared identities and experiences, school counselor institutional power and advocacy, collective care, and freedom in relationship were the prominent themes that emerged from the data. Subthemes also revealed nuances across the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter will summarize and integrate the findings of the current study with the existing body of literature. This chapter will also illuminate the connections between Womanism, Homeplace, and the findings of this study. Furthermore, this chapter will consider the implications of key findings for counselor educators and for the field of school counseling, discuss the limitations of the study, and present recommendations for future research on this topic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the creation of Homeplace between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. This study also strove to understand the perceived benefits of experiencing Homeplace in the relationship between Black adolescent girls and their Black women school counselors, as accentuated by the sentiments shared. Womanist trailblazers are beginning to introduce the research framework into counselor education (Avent-Harris et al., 2023; Haskins et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2023), however this is a growing body of research with few studies integrating Womanism into school counseling specific research. Connecting the creation of Homeplace back to racial socialization and racial identity development literature, as Homeplace was developed within these relationships, the formation of cultural pride and knowledge may have been occurring concurrently. While racial socialization and racial identity development are not prerequisites for the creation of Homeplace between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors, what is known about how these processes may buffer the negative impacts of racism and discrimination for Black girls may be useful in understanding how Homeplace may influence similar outcomes. Therefore, the findings

of this study provided unique insight into the relationships between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors through a Womanism framework. The discussion of research findings will be presented in relation to the to two core research questions that guided this study:

1. How is Homeplace created between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors?
2. What are the perceived benefits of experiencing Homeplace for Black adolescent girls?

Research Question One: How is Homeplace Created Between Black Adolescent Girls and Black Women School Counselors?

The findings of this study suggest that Homeplace is created between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors through *Shared Identities and Experiences*, *School Counselor Advocacy for Students*, *Collective Care* and *Freedom in Relationship*. Homeplace is the environment created by Black women when they work together to resist systems of oppression and people that pose a threat to their psychological and physical safety (hooks, 1990). Specifically relevant to Womanism, Homeplace in this study was created through empowerment strategies and cultivating womanish behaviors, as well as through the expression of love to self and others.

Empowerment Strategies and Cultivating Womanish Behaviors

Empowerment is a major characteristic of Womanism as a theoretical framework, wherein Womanist scholar Alice Walker emphasized the tendency for Black women to exhibit womanish behaviors (Walker, 1983). According to Walker (1983) being womanish refers to the "outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior" that Black women possess to exude

boldness and strength when they experience oppression or adversity (p. xi). Aligned with the results of other research, the former students discussed many of the challenges they experienced while they were high school students. These challenges included dealing with racism, encountering microaggressions and stereotypical expectations, being one of the only Black students in advanced level courses, navigating predominantly white spaces, coming out as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, managing mental health challenges, and/or dealing with cultural stigmas associated with mental health (e.g., Anderson, 2020; Francis et al., 2019; Gadson & Lewis, 2022). Despite these challenges, Black adolescent girls in the current study were empowered through the Homeplace they experienced in their relationships with Black women school counselors. This finding aligns with racial socialization literature and the positive impact that being in community with other Black women can have on the upbringing of Black girls (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022; Hughes et al., 2006; Jones & Neblett, 2017). Thus, the themes from this study that are related to cultivating a womanish identity are *School Counselor Advocacy* and *Shared Identities* and *Experiences*.

Co-researchers discussed how their connections were strengthened by their shared racial and gender identities with their school counselors, as well as similar life experiences they had to navigate although they were born in different generations. School counselors shared that they could relate to their students' challenges by discussing their own parallel experiences of being one of the only Black educators in their school building, processing grief as child, and/or reflecting on memories from their childhood, such as navigating interactions with individuals who doubted their ability to thrive at an academically rigorous PWI. The importance of relatability and shared identities for relationship building between Black students and adults is also reflected in the racial socialization and racial identity literature. This literature suggests that

exposure to Black individuals, a shared understanding of discrimination, and the opportunity to engage in open dialogue about how to navigate discrimination can promote the development of a positive racial identity through racial socialization, which serves as a protective factor against systems of oppression for Black students (Hughes et al., 2006; Jones & Neblett, 2017).

Open dialogue about their shared experiences of discrimination and navigating life challenges as Black girls and women empowered the students to step outside of their comfort zone, confront mental health challenges and remain committed to attending college despite receiving messaging from other Black school personnel that they would not achieve their goals. Thus, the girls exhibited an audacity to be womanish and resist the harms of discrimination. The former students' sense of empowerment and resistance to oppression was also influenced by the school counselors' own willingness to exert their boldness by advocating for systemic change in response to observed injustice in schools. The former students discussed how this fostered feelings of empowerment, as they appeared to admire their Black women school counselors for standing up against injustices on their behalf. Furthermore, as barriers were eliminated through school counselors advocating for systemic change, the former students suggested that they began to internalize their capacity to be successful. One case pair even noted that the former student developed the strength and boldness to advocate for themselves due to the support of her school counselor.

It is important to note that one co-researcher recounted a time when another Black woman school counselor did not offer similar support; and other co-researchers indicated that they were not well supported by white school counselors. Thus, these findings reflect what the existing literature suggests about the misguided assumption to expect all Black educators to be committed to supporting Black students in a similar way due to their shared identities (Millner,

2006). Hence, though findings from this study suggest that shared identities can help strengthen Homeplace, they also suggest that shared identities alone cannot sustain Homeplace. As reflected in the school counselors' direct encouragement of the students *and* their commitment to systems-level advocacy, the Black women school counselors were social justice-oriented school counselors (Ratts et al., 2007). In turn, this propelled them to provide holistic, culturally responsive care to their former students and seek to dismantle systems of oppression. The strategies used by school counselors are consistent with ASCA's ethical standards that emphasize the importance of all school counselors supporting and promoting equitable outcomes for students from marginalized backgrounds (ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, 2022). The findings also aligned with the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al., 2016), which calls for counselors to "employ social advocacy to address community norms, values, and regulations embedded in society that hinder the growth and development of privileged and marginalized clients" (p. 12).

Love of Others

Included in the tenets of Womanism is Black women's tendency to love themselves and love others (Walker 1983). The findings of this study highlight how co-researchers manifested a love for others through *Collective Care* and *Freedom in Relationship*. First, school counselor co-researchers in this study expressed love for their students through collective care that manifested in intentional partnerships and active collaboration with families and students. These partnerships centered each students' unique need(s) (e.g., mental health concerns, college aspirations, responding to discrimination), valued the input of their caregivers, and several school counselors discussed how they viewed their students as the experts of their own lives and futures. This collaborative approach to care is consistent with the collectivism culture of Black

people in general, and Black women in particular. Collective care focuses on how the "village" unites to care for members of the Black community in the face of negative narratives and oppression (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022; Carson, 2009; Stamps et al., 2021). In addition to engaging in joint decision-making with students and families, care and love for others were expressed through the explicit verbal communication of these feelings to one another. The deliberate expression of love to one another is in alignment with Womanism (Walker, 1983).

Former student co-researchers also discussed how they felt nurtured by their Black women school counselors. For example, several student co-researchers discussed how the Homeplace they experienced with their school counselors was a major source of support when they experienced mental health struggles. Through the love that was felt within their Homeplace, one student even credited their decision not to engage in self-harm to the Homeplace they shared with their school counselor. This finding strongly aligns with the literature on how protective factors may counteract negative mental health outcomes for Black girls who are faced with a myriad of life challenges (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022; Hurrellman & Losel, 1990). The school counselors also provided care to the students by consoling them during difficult times and sometimes by providing them "tough love" when they needed to think critically to consider a different perspective. This finding is consistent with the literature about othermothering, where othermothering describes how Black women who are not blood relatives assist in mothering responsibilities to help the community survive and thrive (Collins, 2000).

Finally, co-researchers discussed the freedom they experienced within their Homeplace, as their relationships created a space for them to be their authentic self at school. Both students and school counselor co-researchers described being able to "let their guard down," while experiencing joy and laughter with one another. Within their Homeplaces, co-researchers had a

space to experience all their emotions (e.g., sadness, excitement, fear, hope) without fear of their feelings being minimized or rejected. Furthermore, the Black women school counselors and Black adolescent girls noted that they did not have to codeswitch in their sacred space, given that they could speak straightforwardly with one another. These findings illustrate what the protective factor literature suggests regarding the ways in which Black women intentionally allow Black girls to "let their hair down" as a form of love and care (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022).

Research Question Two: What are the perceived benefits of experiencing Homeplace with Black women school counselors for Black adolescent girls?

The second research question considers the perceived benefits of Black adolescent girls experiencing Homeplace in their relationship with their school counselor. The current literature suggests that Black girls in schools often lack mental health support, endure racism and microaggressions, and are met with suspicion and scrutiny when they excel academically or display non-Eurocentric mannerisms (Anderson, 2020; Blake et al., 2010; Evans-Winters et al., 2018; Morris et al., 2016). Thus, these types of negative experiences in schools can have significant implications for Black girls. Specifically, Black girls may face harsher disciplinary consequences than their counterparts, are less likely to be considered for advanced academic opportunities and have limited access to culturally responsive mental health services at school (Blake et al., 2011; Epstein et al., 2017; Morris, 2016; Sissoko et al., 2023). In turn, this can lead to diminished mental health, the school-to-prison pipeline, and restricted opportunities to reach their personal, academic and career goals among Black girls (Morris, 2016; Sissoko et al., 2023). The benefits of experiencing Homeplace with their former school counselors for the former students who participated in this study directly contradict the negative experiences and outcomes Black girls too often encounter in K-12 schools.

First, student co-researchers described how their self-confidence developed in relationship with their former school counselors. Aligned with Womanism and the notion of being womanish, sentiments shared by co-researchers in this study indicate that their newfound boldness gave them the strength to speak up for themselves, to believe in their abilities to succeed, and to take healthy risks by trying new things, all in pursuit of their dreams and aspirations. Indeed, according to the existing literature, developing a womanish identity can be empowering for Black women and encourage them to achieve goals that others doubt they are capable of accomplishing (Haskins et al., 2019).

Student co-researchers also described how their shared identities and experiences with their former school counselors allowed them to develop a mutual understanding regarding their shared intersectional identities as Black women. Such an understanding meant the Black girls experienced comfort in knowing their school counselors would relate with them regarding challenges they experienced due to their intersecting identities. This mutual understanding also meant they did not have to justify the discomfort or discontent they experienced when they received a microaggression or experienced discrimination. These findings are consistent with other scholarship that suggest Black women can experience positive social-emotional outcomes when they pursue connections with women who share their identities (Bryant-Davis, 2023; Haskins et al., 2019). As conveyed by the former students, the community and connection established been Black women (and girls) can promote a sense of belonging versus isolation, in addition to serving as a safe space where they can engage in critical dialogue around their shared identities to resist the harms of oppression (Bryant-Davis, 2023; Haskins et al., 2019).

Finally, the direct and indirect support of their school counselors created affirming experiences that allowed Black girls' mental and behavioral health needs to be met. Several co-

researchers discussed experiencing intense emotions, including grief, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation. Black clients may refrain from seeking mental health support due to cultural incongruences between mental health providers and clients of color (Steinfeldt et al., 2020; Townes et al., 2009). Given that the Black women school counselors responded to the Black girls' lived experiences and conveyed sincere understanding, the former student co-researchers felt comfortable expressing these emotions to their Black women school counselors. As such, their relationship served as a tool for addressing mental health disparities between Black girls and their counterparts (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022; DeKruyf & Auger, 2013; Morris, 2016). In a similar vein, school counselors in this study responded to behavioral concerns that could have resulted in their former students receiving harsh punishment by teachers and other school personnel, as underscored in the professional literature (Francis et al., 2019; Morris, 2016; Wun, 2016). In particular, former students in this study recalled times when they avoided what could have been unfair sanctions due to their Black women school counselors demonstrating love and boldness through their professional advocacy and the direct encouragement communicated to their Black girl students.

Implications

This study explored the relationship qualities that need to exist for Homeplace to be created and sustained between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. This study also revealed the perceived benefits of Homeplace for former Black girl students who developed relationships with their Black women school counselors. The findings of this study have several implications for the field of school counseling, counselor education training programs, and school counseling research.

Implications for School Counseling Practice

First, school leaders should provide systemic support for Black women school counselors in the field. Doing so may support the recruitment and retention of this group. One example of how support can be provided is through the implementation of affinity groups or sistah circles to support the creation of community amongst Black women school counselors. Providing time and space for Black women school counselors to receive support from one another can help them resist the oppression they experience at work and feel more supported and affirmed (Haskins et al., 2024; Parker et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2023).

Moreover, school leaders should be cognizant of the invisible load that Black women school counselors may carry when supporting Black girl students in addition to fulfilling other roles and responsibilities that are outlined in their job description (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017). Given the cultural connection that Black women may have with Black girls, it is not uncommon for Black girls that are not officially assigned to their caseload to lean on Black women school counselors for emotional support. This may be especially likely in schools where there is a lower number of Black people represented across the school staff. Knowledge of this possibility may improve the way school leaders care for Black women school counselors and how they evaluate their overall performance. Recommendations for how this can be accomplished include reducing the assignment of non-counseling duties to school counselors, applying ASCA's guidance for student-to-school counselor caseload ratios, and integrating collective care practices into the culture of the school counseling departments (ASCA, 2023; Chamberlain, 2020; Nayoung & Glenn, 2018).

As illustrated in the current study, it may be advantageous for school leaders and school counseling programs to adopt Womanism ideals that support the creation of Homeplace between

Black students and school counselors. Specifically, K-12 school leaders and school counseling program faculty can require school counselors to learn about Womanism and Homeplace in relation to supporting Black girls through both pre-service and in-service training. This training could be required for all school counselors, including school counselors who identify as Black, as not all school counselors will know how to integrate these ideals into practice. Furthermore, these trainings should underscore how Womanism and Homeplace relate to ASCA's professional standards (e.g., partner with constituents to advocate for student achievement and equity) and social justice frameworks (ASCA, 2019; Ratts et al., 2016) to communicate its relevance to the field.

Although this study centered Black women school counselors, it is critical for school leaders to recognize the necessity for school counselors of all racial and gender backgrounds to engage in systemic advocacy for students who belong to marginalized groups. School counselors have an ethical responsibility to advocate with and on behalf of students who belong to marginalized groups and to collaborate with caregivers as they are providing support to Black girl students (ASCA, 2022). Lastly, schools should prioritize understanding what Black adolescent girls can gain in community and relationship with other Black people (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022). Recognizing these values does not promote divisiveness or disunity; instead, it may lead to a deeper appreciation for the qualities of relationship building that are prevalent amongst collectivist cultures and may be protective factors for Black girls who experience oppression in schools (Bennefield & Jackson, 2022; Banwo, 2023; Carson, 2009).

Implications for Counselor Education Programs

Lastly, there are several implications for counselor education programs as they prepare to train the next generation of school counselors. Faculty associated with counselor education

programs can also implement or facilitate structured training on Womanism and Homeplace for school counselors in training. Again, training should relate the core tenets of Womanism and Homeplace to the ASCA professional and ethical standards and to established social justice frameworks (ASCA 2019, 2020; Ratts et al., 2016). Additionally, counselor education programs should educate school counseling students about the strengths of Black adolescent girls and how acknowledgement of these strengths can promote a strengths-based approach to supporting Black girls instead of viewing them from the deficit lens they are often examined through (Mayes et al., 2022). When education about Black girls' strengths is prioritized, school counseling programs can begin to educate school counseling students about the unique challenges Black adolescent girls may experience due to their intersectional identities Moreover, this study highlights the need for counselor education programs to teach school counselors in training about the strengths of collectivist cultures. School counselors in training may learn about the challenges Black Americans and other minoritized cultural groups may experience; however, they also should learn how to respond to collectivism as a strength for Black families to exhibit a strengths-based approach to their professional practice (Banwo, 2022; Carson, 2009).

Additionally, counselor education programs should educate school counselors in training about the invisible labor that Black women school counselors may endure as they are nurturing Black adolescent girls (Social Science Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017). Acknowledging and discussing this reality in counselor education programs may help prepare Black women school counseling students for this experience, and thus encourage them to set boundaries at work to avoid emotional taxation and burnout (Parker et al., 2023). Such discussions may also help school counseling students who do not identify as Black women to recognize when their Black women colleagues may be navigating difficult emotions because of

this invisible labor, and in turn, offer much needed support. Lastly, counselor education programs should incorporate Womanism into theories courses to ensure that school counseling students are aware of the existence of this theory and are able to identify ways to apply key tenets of this theoretical framework to their professional practice (CACREP, 2024; ,2005).

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to explore how Homeplace was created between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors and to understand the perceived benefits of experiencing Homeplace in this relationship for Black adolescent girls. The current study produced notable results that constituents should consider as they are providing support to Black adolescent girls in schools and training future school counselors in counselor education programs. However, this study is not without its limitations. The targeted populations for the current study were Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. Recent high school graduates participated in this study and reflected on their experiences with their former school counselors. This may be a limitation, because between one and four years had passed since former students graduated high school. The same amount of time had passed since school counselor co-researchers were the assigned school counselor for their former student. It is possible that some of the experiences shared within each dyad had been forgotten or were difficult to recall during their interviews with the researcher (Kirkevold & Bergland, 2007). Additionally, all former students and school counselors who participated in this study were from the same state. It is possible that the experiences across cases were related to regional or state specific factors that shaped the schooling experiences for former students or impacted school counselor training that influenced the relationship dynamics within each dyad.

Social desirability bias may have been a factor in this study (Bergen & Laboonté, 2020). The relationships between former students and school counselors were all discussed using positive and affirming language. Having knowledge that the other co-researcher in each case would be exposed to their responses may have caused co-researchers to avoid speaking critically about the other person or to recall memories that were less positive. This may have limited what co-researchers were willing to share and could have thereby impacted the findings of this study (Kirkevold & Bergland, 2007). Furthermore, when recruiting for this study, the researcher relied on networks of school counselors to whom she was actively connected. It is possible that the school counselor co-researchers that agreed to participate in this study did so because of their association with or connection to the researcher. The school counselor co-researchers shared the study with former students who they felt met the criteria for participation in this study. Thus, it is also possible that former students agreed to participate because they did not want to disappoint their former school counselors.

The researcher relied solely on interviews as a data collection method. It is plausible that an additional method of data collection (e.g., artifacts) could have strengthened the findings of this study and may have allowed the researcher to triangulate the data to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the creation of Homeplace between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). Lastly, as with all qualitative research, it can be challenging for the researcher to maintain objectivity during data collection and analysis (Berger, 2015; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Watt, 2007). Although the researcher took deliberate steps to avoid researcher bias, it is possible that her lived experiences and perspectives impacted how she approached the research process and interpreted the data.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study highlighted the power of utilizing a Womanist research framework in school counseling research. Future school counseling research should continue to recognize Womanism as a vital and viable framework when conducting qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods school counseling research (e.g., Parker et al., 2023). Counselor education researchers have begun to utilize Womanism as a theoretical framework (Haskins et al., 2019), demonstrating its merit for informing how Black girls and Black women can be supported in the field. Counselor education researchers have also examined the experiences of Black girls in schools (Harris et al., 2017; Holcomb-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2021; Mayes et al., 2021), which parallels much of the findings in the current study. However, this study is relatively unique, as it illustrates the deep connection between Black women school counselors and Black adolescent girls by examining their perspectives simultaneously. Because the author is unaware of other studies that have taken a similar approach, more research can be conducted to fully understand the complexities of Black school counselors and Black girls' experiences as individuals and in community with one another. The following recommendations should be considered for future research studies.

In the future, the researcher plans to build upon the results of this study by exploring the creation of Homeplace between Black girls who are current high school students and their Black women school counselors utilizing a Womanist research framework. This study could illuminate complexities that were not captured through this study due to fragmented memories. Additionally, the current study explored school counselors and students in pairs. A future study should consider the lived experiences of each population separately. Doing so may help to eliminate social desirability bias and could lead to a more in-depth understanding of how

Homeplace is reflected across co-researchers. Additionally, the researcher plans to examine how the Homeplace Black adolescent girls experienced with Black women school counselors influenced their decisions to pursue their post-secondary path and job or career choices. Interviews conducted for the present study revealed that each of the former high school student co-researchers currently attend a four-year institution for college or are a member of the United States military. A future study conducted by the researcher could examine what the Homeplace experienced with their Black women school counselors may have offered them as they considered post-secondary opportunities and how Homeplace may have created a foundation for these pursuits.

The present study discussed how collectivism shaped the relationship between Black women school counselors and Black adolescent girls. Future research could build upon how collectivism was presented within this study to actively involve Black adolescent girls in the research process by combining Womanism and youth participatory action research (YPAR) as research frameworks. YPAR is a collectivistic-oriented research framework that actively involves youth as participants and researchers to cultivate youth's critical insights and knowledge as they strive for social justice (Cammarota, 2017). In a similar vein, a Participatory Action Research study that involves current Black women school counselors could help researchers and practitioners gain deeper insight into their experiences as Black women school counselors (Crenshaw & Evans-Winters, 2024). Lastly, this study focused on the experiences of Black adolescent girls in high school within their relationship with Black women school counselors. Future research could utilize Womanism as a research framework to explore the creation of Homeplace between Black girls in elementary and middle school and Black woman school counselors. A study focused on younger students could provide a deeper understanding of

the development of Homeplace by illuminating the experiences of these groups across school levels.

Conclusion

The current study offers rich insight into the creation of Homeplace between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. This study is amongst the first of its kind to integrate Womanism as a research framework into school counseling research. The findings of this study revealed that Homeplace is created through expressing collective care and love for one another, having shared identities and experiences, and school counselors taking an active role in advocating for systemic change on behalf of their students who identify as Black girls. Furthermore, the study unveiled that Black adolescent girls experienced joy in their relationship with their Black women school counselor, shared mutual understanding with their school counselor, and developed an empowered Womanish identity during their tenure in high school.

School leaders and school counseling teams should attend to the implications of this study as they strive to support Black girls in high school and care for their Black women school counselors. Furthermore, counselor educators should consider the implications as they continue to conduct school counseling research and train future generations of school counselors. The current study builds upon the efforts of Black women researchers who strive to understand the experiences of Black girls and women in education, promote resistance to systems of oppression, and amplify our collective strength. Although this study uncovered robust findings, advancing this area of inquiry through future research will deepen the understanding of Black women school counselors and the Black girls they support through strengths-focused perspective.

Epilogue

As the journey of writing this dissertation nears its end, I believe it is important for me to intentionally pause to reflect on how this experience has impacted me. In qualitative research, the researcher is instrument (Xu & Storr, 2012). Meaning, the researcher is considered a research instrument as they conduct interviews and analyze data (Xu & Storr, 2012). This characteristic is one of the most intriguing aspects of qualitative research for me, as the researcher is encouraged to explore and assess how their unique positionality may influence how they engage in the research process. As a Black woman school counselor researcher who was conducting research about other Black women in the school counseling context, I was confronted with the reality that I shared several identities and experiences with my co-researchers.

To this end, I saw so much of myself in my co-researchers. Not only was I to be an instrument in the research process, but I could also relate on a personal and professional level with the women who were a part of this study. I believe this sharedness allowed us to establish quick rapport during our virtual interview, which further supported me to carefully approach data analysis to ensure that their sharedness was captured. However, through this process, I learned that it was not enough to simply identify overlaps and similarities in their experiences—which is often what researchers are taught to do in data analyzation. This process taught me to honor my co-researchers' oneness and to ensure their unique identities and experiences were not lost as codes and themes derived from the data.

This work taught me to dedicate more time to understanding who future co-researchers are beyond the context or environment of the research study. One possibility in exploring this in the future may be to incorporate a timeline activity that encourages co-researchers to critically reflect on the salient moments in their life history that influenced who they are in the present.

This activity could be informative and empowering for co-researchers as they make sense of these moments in time. Additionally, this could serve as tool for me to reference throughout data analysis. In future research, I would also want to invite co-researchers to write their own short autobiographies that would be included before the results section in the write-up to lead with co-researchers' individual narratives before any discussion of findings.

I learned so much from the women who womanishly contributed to this study, and I believe that I am a better researcher because of them. The way that I perceive myself in the research process has shifted. I see myself less as the wise researcher who has a strict research agenda to accomplish, and more as a co-researcher who is not afraid to slow down and pivot to ensure that all my co-researchers feel respected and included in every step of the process. I am excited and eager to continue this work, and I look forward to inviting future co-researchers to play a more active role in the research journey.

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Appendix A

Letter to Prospective Co-Researchers

Hi _____,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study! My name is Shontell White Zenon, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program in the School of Education at the College of William and Mary located in Williamsburg, Virginia. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between Black adolescent girls and their Black women school counselors during high school. The information collected from this study will be used to complete my dissertation to obtain my doctoral degree. Please continue reading to determine if you are eligible for participation in this study and to learn more information about this study.

Former high school students are eligible to participate in this study if they meet the following criteria:

1. Identify as a Black woman
2. Were assigned a Black woman school counselor at some point during high school
    a. School counselor must agree to participate in study (criteria listed below)
3. Are between the ages of 18-25

School counselors are eligible to participate in this study if they meet the following criteria:

1. Identify as a Black woman
2. Identify as an antiracist and culturally responsive school counselor
3. Were the assigned school counselor for the identified former high school student at any point during her high school career

Discussion and recollection of oppressive events may cause psychological distress to participants. If participants report these feelings, the researcher will provide a list of mental health resources available in your area. The benefits of participating in this study are that you will have the opportunity to express your views about your experiences in high school or as a school counselor, and you will have the opportunity to help develop a research line of inquiry about this subject matter.

If you meet the criteria for participation and are interested in moving forward with this study, please **click here to complete the informed consent form.** After completion of this form, you will be prompted to click the **Zoom scheduler** link to select a time for a one-on-one interview with me in the future.

If the link to the scheduler is not automatically provided to you after you complete the informed consent, you can also access it here.

Upon completion of the study, you will receive a $20 Target gift card that will be delivered to your email address within two weeks from the date of your interview.

I look forward to the opportunity to learn more about you and to how your voice may contribute to this body of research. Please email me if you have any questions or concerns.

Appendix B

Reflexivity Journal

12/01/2023 -Dissertation proposal defense was today. I successfully proposed. Overall, the experience was very informative. I received several recommendations for changes. The most prevalent recommendation was to make sure I was centering Womanist tenants as I told the story of Black girls' experiences in schools. I needed to be careful not to present information from a deficit perspective. I plan to reshape this narrative and resubmit chapters 1-3 to my committee for review. Once I receive approval from my committee, I can move forward with IRB submission to begin study.

01/04/2024 - Proposal defense changes submitted to committee. Awaiting approval to move forward with IRB submission.

01/12/2024 - Followed up with committee about the changes I submitted last week. Still waiting to hear back.

01/19/2024 - I heard back from my committee today. They would like me to refine the interview questions to ensure they align with Homeplace and Womanist principles. I immediately made these revisions and resubmitted them to my committee today.

01/25/2024 - My committee reached out today and requested that I revise two of the interview questions to highlight how Homeplace is felt when faced with oppression. My methodologist also recommended creating a reflection activity to give to participants before interviews to define Homeplace. I made the revisions and created the reflection activity. I submitted these changes to my committee today.

01/26/2024 - Received approval from co-chair to move forward with IRB. I plan to work on it this weekend.

01/27/2024 - I started IRB submission process today. Since I am a student, one of my co-chairs must be a principal investigator along with me and must submit the IRB application. I sent an email to Drs. Parker and Augustine requesting help with this.

01/29/2024 - Co-chairs requested a revision in IRB and informed consent language to include discussion of psychological risks associated with discussion of oppressive events. I made requested revision and informed co-chairs.

01/29/2024 - IRB protocol submitted and accepted by compliance. I'm so relieved! Looking forward to getting started with data collection.

01/30/2024 - Finalized study materials including study flyer, transferring informed consent to Qualtrics, organizing Zoom scheduler, Homeplace reflection activity, etc.
02/08/2024 - First interview went very well! She chose the pseudonym Moné. I was surprised by how emotional she was and how intense her memories were about her relationship with her

former school counselor. Several times during the interview she had to get up to get a tissue to wipe her tears. She recalled how her former school counselor help her through the loss of her grandparent and described what it felt like to have a family-like connection with her.

02/09/2024 - The second interview was this afternoon. She chose the pseudonym Alexis. Alexis described how connected she and her family were to her former school counselor. She recalled how inspired she was by her school counselor and how she wanted to go to the same college that her school counselor went to. I'm looking forward to hearing more from the former high school students and to the first school counselor interview!

02/15/2024 - Third interview of the study and first school counselor interview! This participant selected the pseudonym Mrs. Morrison. The former school counselor said she chose this name to honor Black woman author, Toni Morrison. This interview was very rich. She was Alexis' school counselor, so it was cool to see the commonalities between this pair. Mrs. Morrison talked a lot about how important it was for her to be aware of the history of the community and school she worked within. A major takeaway from this interview was the role she played in sharing cultural wealth and capital with her former student.

02/16/2024 - Today I met with the second school counselor. This was the fourth interview of the study. Her pseudonym was Mrs. Hooks. I encouraged school counselors to keep the Black women writers/scholars trend going. This interview felt a little different from my first school counselor interview. Mrs. Hooks spoke a lot her experiences as a school counselor more broadly, so there were a couple times when I had to remind her to try to highlight her relationship with her former student. Mrs. Hooks talked significantly about the mental health support she provided her former student.

02/19/2024 - I feel like this month is flying by, but I am so proud of the progress that I have made in data collection so far! Today I had my fifth interview overall and third interview with a school counselor. This school counselor selected the pseudonym Dr. Jacobs. She was the counselor for Moné, so again it was so special to see the similarities between what each person in the pair shared. One key takeaway from today's interview was the following quote by Dr. Jacobs: "But it's just different when you're talking to a mirror and you're looking at the younger version of yourself, or the younger version of your mom, or the younger version of your sister, my best friend." This quote highlights the generational experience and impact that she had with her former student. She also discussed the institutional power that school counselors possess. Again, this interview was very enlightening.

02/19/2024 - I had a second interview today with my sixth participant and third interview with a former high school student. This student selected the pseudonym, Leigh. Leigh was the former student of Mrs. Hooks. She also described some of the mental health challenges she experienced in high school and how Mrs. Hooks supported her through them. Leigh became emotional during the interview when she described what it felt like to hear Mrs. Hooks say she was proud of her. I was surprised by this emotion, because there was very little indication of these emotions prior to this. She said this was because she takes words very seriously. Again, it was a cool experience to see the similarities emerge.

02/20/2024 - We are coming along! Seventh interview of the study and fourth school counselor participant. She selected the pseudonym Ms. Shakur for this study. This interview felt different from the others because she was concise with her responses. Concise is not a bad thing, it just surprised me since many of the other school counselor participants had been very descriptive. She described how she challenged her former student to see her strengths by helping her identify opportunities that could align with her strengths. Overall, I felt pretty good about how this interview went!

02/21/2024 - Today's interview was my eighth overall and fourth with a former high school student. She chose the pseudonym Myrtle. This interview was so rich and informative. Like Leigh, Myrtle also shared how her school counselor supported her through mental health challenges in high school. Myrtle shared about the closeness between her and her school counselor that allowed her to trust her, as well as the safe space that her school counselor provided her when she needed to process difficult emotions.

02/22/2024 - I had a break in interviews today! I worked on transcriptions and coding. I have another interview tomorrow.

02/23/2024 - Today I had my ninth interview overall and my fifth and final interview with a school counselor participant. Today's interview was with Myrtle's school counselor, who chose the pseudonym Dr. Walker. Dr. Walker became emotional when she started to reflect on the impact that Myrtle had on her life. She wanted to be sure that I knew that the joy and connection experienced between the two of them left a significant impression on her and that the space they created was one that she needed too.

2/26/2024 - I had my final participant interview with a former high school student today. She selected the pseudonym, Ashanti. Ashanti became emotional when she reflected on the relationship between her and Ms. Shakur. She shared that Ms. Shakur helped her feel relaxed and affirmed her identity. She said Ms. Shakur helped her recognize her love for literature, poetry and public speaking by encouraging her to try new classes her senior year. A notable takeaway was how she described Ms. Shakur as a 3-in-1: a school counselor, a sister and a mother-figure.

Appendix C

Positionality Statement

My name is Shontell White Zenon, and I am a Black, cisgender, heterosexual, married, Christian, English-speaking, able-bodied woman. I am the descendent of enslaved Africans who were forcibly migrated to this country and who endured legalized forms of oppression for generations. I was raised in a small town in southern Virginia. My parents were married, and I have one older sister. Growing up, my parents made a living through working for a tire and rubber company and supporting individuals with physical and intellectual impairments. Neither of my parents attended college, so that made my sister and I first-generation college students. My parents worked tirelessly to support our family and because of their tenacity we maintained a comfortable middle-class social standing.

My ancestors were activists against racism and other forms of social oppression, and several engaged in civil rights protests during the early and middle twentieth century in my hometown. As I grew up and experienced my own, oftentimes more covert run-ins with racism and discrimination, I leaned on the strength and resoluteness of those that came before me to carry me forward. Social justice has always been a key value of mine and the work that I do today centers on creating a more just and equitable society for present and future generations.

In high school, I was assigned a Black woman as my school counselor. I did not know her well and only began to interact with her when it was time for me to consider post-secondary planning. Despite our shared identities, I did not experience Homeplace within my relationship with my school counselor. I did not identify her as a major part of my support system and never leaned on her for support when I experienced oppression at school. I did not know it at the time but given the qualifications that are required to become a school counselor, she was trained to do

more than just provide academic support to me and my peers. I am sure she faced challenges with role ambiguity and being overworked because of the lack of resources that were available at my high school However, as a Black adolescent girl navigating changing relationship dynamics, I may have benefited from emotional support from her.

I attended a predominately white institution for undergraduate and graduate school. During this time, I experienced challenges with racism and discrimination and was often mistaken as an athlete by white peers and faculty. Many white people on campus bought into the stereotype that Black students could not be admitted into college because of their own merit and had to be there because of their athletic abilities. Although I gained some of my closest friends in college, I also learned a lot about the implications of my Blackness in a white space.

After graduate school, I became a school counselor at a high school in a suburban area. Most of the students and staff at the school identified as white. I intentionally established relationships with students and families on my caseload, but quickly realized that the more accessible I made myself to my students, the more frequently they visited me. This became especially true for my students who were Black girls. As time progressed, I noticed that Black girls that were not even on my caseload would come to see me in my office. Black girls would often visit me to process emotions after experiencing racism or discrimination perpetuated by peers or school personnel. When I asked them why they were stopping by, I would receive responses like, “It’s easy to talk to you,” “You understand what I’m going through, “or “This is the first place I thought to come to.” These same students would also invite me to experience their joy when were accepted into college, welcomed new family members, or when they wanted to celebrate attaining some other personal goal. Experiences during my childhood, young adulthood, and career a school counselor influenced my decision to pursue this study.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Former Students

Demographic Questions

1. What is your racial identification?
2. What is your gender?
3. What are your pronouns?
4. What is your age?
5. What year did you graduate high school?
6. What year (s) was ____ your school counselor in high school? or
7. Where was your high school located?

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the connection you experienced with your school counselor.
2. What was it like to have a Black woman as a school counselor?
3. Describe what it felt like to be in the company of your school counselor? What words come to mind?
4. Tell me how love was expressed and experienced in your relationship with your school counselor.
5. Tell me how you knew your school counselor cared about you.
6. Tell me how the connection with your school counselor influenced your view of yourself?
7. Tell me about a time when you felt encouraged and supported by your school counselor? What occurred? What was the outcome of this feeling for you?
8. Schools may not always feel like the safest places for Black girls. Tell me how your school counselor may have helped to create a sense of protection in school for you.
9. Tell me what this relationship offered you when faced with racism, discrimination, or other forms of oppression.
10. Tell me how joy was experienced in your relationship with your school counselor.
11. Is there anything else about your relationship with your former school counselor that you would like me to know?

School Counselors

Demographic Questions

1. What is your racial identification?

2. What is your gender?
3. What are your pronouns?
4. What is your age?
5. What state was the HS you worked at in?
6. Where was this high school located?

Interview Questions

1. Please describe your connection with your former student.
2. How did experience love in this connection with your student?
3. How did you let your former student know that you loved and cared for her?
4. Tell me how the connection with your former student counselor influenced your view of yourself as a Black woman school counselor?
5. Schools may not always feel like the safest places for Black girls. Tell me how your connection with your former student may have helped to create a sense of protection in school for her.
6. Tell me what this relationship offered your former student when faced with racism, discrimination, or other forms of oppression.
7. Tell me how joy was experienced in your relationship with your former student.
8. Is there anything else about your relationship with your former student that you would like me to know?

Appendix E

A Priori Codes

- Womanish
- Empowered
- Protection
- Community
- Connection
- Affirmed
- Joy
- Inspired
- Homeplace
- Support
- Strength
- Healing
- Belonging
- Authenticity
- Role model
- Familial bond
- Love
- Restoration
- Sisterhood
- Mother figure
- Vulnerability
- Hope

Appendix F

Research Study Informed Consent Form

Dear Potential Co-researcher:

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study! My name is Shontell White Zenon and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program in the School of Education at the College of William and Mary located in Williamsburg, Virginia. **The purpose of this study is to explore the creation of Homeplace between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors.** The information collected from this study will be used to complete my dissertation to obtain my doctoral degree. Please continue reading to determine if you are eligible for participation in this study and to learn more information about this study.

Former high school students are eligible to participate in this study if they meet the following criteria:

1. Identify as a Black woman
2. Were assigned a Black woman school counselor at some point during high school
3. School counselor must agree to participate in study (criteria listed below)
4. Are between the ages of 18-25

School counselors are eligible to participate in this study if they meet the following criteria:

1. Identify as a Black woman
2. Identify as an antiracist and culturally responsive school counselor
3. Were the assigned school counselor for the identified former high school student at any point during her high school career

Audio Interviews

Your participation will involve you taking part in one 60-90 minute Zoom interview. During the interview you will be asked questions related to your experiences as a Black girl in high school or as a Black woman school counselor. The interview questions will focus on the connection and relationship between Black adolescent girls and Black women school counselors. You will be provided copies of the interview transcripts by the researcher to read and review to ensure accuracy. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. At any time, you can request that the investigator destroy your data or that the investigator exclude your data from any analysis. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

Confidentiality

The Zoom interview will be audio taped to ensure accurate data retrieval and analysis. You will select a pseudonym and your responses will be recorded using this assumed name. At the end of the study any information linking your name to the pseudonym will be destroyed. The recordings will be stored in a secured, password protected OneDrive folder that only the researcher will

have access to. I will make every effort to keep your personal information confidential and conceal your identity in the study's results and we will keep your personally-identifiable information confidential by using pseudonyms and password protected files. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used.

Risks

Discussion and recollection of oppressive events may cause psychological distress to participants. If participants report these feelings, the researcher will provide a list of mental health resources available in your area. The benefits of participating in this study are that you will have the opportunity to express your views about your experiences in high school or as a school counselor, and you will have the opportunity to help develop a research line of inquiry about this subject matter. You can receive a copy of the results, if you so desire, at the conclusion of the research. You are not obligated to respond to all questions and that at any time you are able to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your participation and involvement in this study by notifying the researcher by phone or e-mail.

Results

Results from the study will be given to you concluding the completion of the dissertation.

Concerns During Study

If any concerns arise during this study please notify Dr. Ward, chair of the EDIRC, at 757-221-2358 (EDIRC-L@wm.edu) and Dr. Jennifer Stevens, Chair of the PHSC at 757-221-3862 (jastev@wm.edu).

By signing below, you acknowledge:

- Your participation in the study is voluntary.
- You are 18 years of age.
- You are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G

Homeplace Reflection Activity

A Homeplace refers to a safe space created by Black women where they provide one another care and nurturance when faced with racism, discrimination and other forms of oppression.

Before our interview, please reflect on how Homeplace relates to your student/school counselor relationship.

Appendix H

Study Recruitment Flyer

Participants will receive a Target gift card!

HOMEPLACES

are spaces created by Black women to resist oppression

Seeking pairs of Black women who recently graduated from high school and their former Black women school counselors to participate in this dissertation study

This study will investigate the development of Homeplace among Black adolescent girls and Black women high school counselors

To qualify for participation:

- Both people in the pair must agree to participate
- Participants must be available for a 1.5 hour Zoom call

- **Former high school students**
  - Must be between ages of 18-25
  - Graduated within the last 4 years

- **School counselors**
  - Should identify as antiracist
  - Were assigned to the former student at any point in high school
  - Do not need to be currently practicing

This project was approved by the William & Mary protection of human rights committee (phone: 757-221-3966) on 1/31/2024 and expires on 1/31/2025

Vita

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