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**How Black Women Experience Undergraduate Mentorship for Career Development:
An Analysis of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly
White Institutions (PWIs)**

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Abstract

Faculty-student mentorship has been shown to impact students' career development while in college, yet Black women students' experience with this form of mentorship has yet to be explored. In this paper, I aim to gain insight into how Black women experience undergraduate faculty-student mentorship to receive career development support at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Using semi-structured interviews, I find that college environments of a predominantly white student and faculty demographic can negatively affect Black women students' intentionality in initiating mentoring relationships with faculty. Based on these findings, I offer recommendations that both PWIs and HBCUs can implement. I argue that these institutions should increase the representation of Black women across all academic disciplines to foster approachable environments. The findings presented here give insight into how Black women who seek undergraduate mentorship from faculty to guide their career development can be better supported.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

"If you cannot see where you are going, ask someone who has been there before."

— J Loren Norris

Mentorship in college is a way for students to receive guidance and support in many aspects of life, including in their career development. Guidance from someone more experienced can provide students with the knowledge of how to navigate different career pathways and the confidence to succeed. The importance of career development in higher education is evident in the establishment of college career centers, career advising, undergraduate internship opportunities, undergraduate research, etc. Accordingly, this study considers if the career development aspect of college mentorship is experienced differently by Black women at two types of college institutions: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Specifically, how do Black women experience undergraduate faculty-student mentorship for career development at HBCUs and PWIs?

The historical exclusion of Black students from higher education institutions was a driving force behind the creation of HBCUs. HBCUs became spaces for cultivating Black pride for students and a Black-centered curriculum, highlighting the achievements of Black trailblazers and combating negative discriminatory perceptions of the Black race. Today, HBCUs maintain their same mission of being academic institutions where Black students are encouraged to succeed while being provided the support that uplifts both their intellect and character. Furthermore, HBCUs have the potential to impact how Black students experience mentorship because Black students make up the majority racial demographic. In contrast, although Predominantly White Institutions or PWIs have been making efforts in recent times to diversify their students, staff,

faculty, and content of the classes through DEI initiatives, Black students and culture remain as the minority in these spaces.

This paper intends to bring attention to the lived experiences of Black women in college to understand how best to promote their success early on in their career development. Black women are often a minority in professional career spaces, and it's essential to know how best to support them to achieve success. Are the current practices at the different college institutions adequately preparing Black women for career success? Is support in the different environments accessible to Black women? Through 14 interviews with Black women graduates of HBCUs and PWIs, this paper investigates whether the difference in the institutions' racial demographic and cultural emphasis impacts how Black women experience faculty-student college mentorship and subsequent career development. Through an analysis of Black women's narratives, this study finds that lack of representation of Black women faculty in college environments can negatively influence Black women's intentionality in initiating mentoring relationships and seeking career development guidance in faculty. This finding has key policy implications for how predominantly white institutions and predominantly white academic disciplines can best foster environments in which Black women college students feel welcomed to ask for guidance and fully supported to receive the career support that they desire.

Background

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

In the United States, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, commonly referred to as HBCUs, have existed as higher education institutions since the founding of Cheyney University in 1837. The Higher Education Act of 1965 officially defines HBCUs as schools of

higher learning that were accredited and established before 1964 and whose principal mission was the education of African Americans. Before the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the majority of Black Americans did not have access to White educational institutions due to racism and discriminatory policies such as segregation and Jim Crow laws. Since their establishment, HBCUs have shared a collective mission focused on providing higher education opportunities for and promoting the success of Black Americans. With that, HBCUs stand in distinct contrast to predominantly white institutions or PWIs[1].

Today, there are 107 HBCUs across the country, including both public and private institutions. HBCUs continue to play a major role in fostering the educational success of many Black Americans by providing culturally relevant environments that nurture Black students, acknowledge Black history, and uplift Black culture. Specifically, HBCUs are intentionally designed to focus on the personal and academic development of Black students and foster climates of Black racial pride and inclusivity (Freeman, 2021).

Literature Review

Types of Mentorship

Scholars have approached the study of mentorship by distinguishing between formal and informal mentorship relations. Several authors have recognized formal mentoring as mentoring relationships structured and organizationally managed by an industry or educational institution (Chao et al., 1992; Sinanan, 2016). Formal mentoring relationships have also been found to include a mentor who volunteers themselves to support a mentee, pairing based on similar interests, structured workshops, and set objectives (Erickson, 2009; Sinanan, 2016). Conversely,

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[1] Predominantly White Institutions, or PWIs, are universities or other higher education institutions in which the 50% or more of the demographic is comprised of white students.

scholars suggest that informal mentoring relationships develop naturally, without the involvement of a third party that matches the pairing or oversees it (Chao et al., 1992; Eby & Allen, 2008). These types of relationships have also been found to reflect self-selection behavior on the part of the mentee and whom they seek to be their mentor or vice versa (Sinanan, 2016).

Mentorship Defined in Higher Education

The literature on mentorship does not share a single comprehensive and consistent definition of mentoring applicable across all industries (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991). Presently, there are about 50 different ways mentoring is defined across the literature (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Crisp and Cruz (2009) provided a descriptive view of the four major domains that comprise the concept of mentoring, identified as:

1. Psychological and emotional support.
2. Support for setting goals and choosing a career path.
3. Academic knowledge support aimed at advancing a student's knowledge relevant to their chosen field.
4. Specification of a role model.

Through a systematic literature review of 54 studies, Nuis et al. (2023) builds upon Crisp and Cruz's (2009) four domains to provide a functional definition of mentoring in higher education:

> Mentoring is a process based on a developmental relationship between two persons in which one person is more experienced (mentor) than the other (mentee). The mentor provides support, more specifically career, emotional, psychosocial, psychological, and academic support, to promote and facilitate student success, competence development, and career development.

Faculty-Student Mentoring Outcomes in Higher Education

Previous research has found the impact of mentorship on college students to be generally positive in helping them navigate academic, professional, and social facets of life. For example, mentored students were found to have higher GPAs, persistence, retention, and comfort with educational environments (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Lunsford et al., 2017). Furthermore, the

determinants of who can be a mentor to a college student are broad. Crisp and Cruz (2009) found that those who took on the role of mentors to college students included university faculty, staff, peers, religious leaders, graduate students, and family. However, the most relevant to higher education is faculty-student mentorship. Both formal and informal faculty-student mentoring relationships have been found to positively impact student outcomes (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Terenzini et al., 1996). Research has shown that formal faculty mentoring programs are expected to be adequate examples of mentorship when they are supportive in furthering a student's personal and career development (i.e., persistence, self-efficacy, academic performance) (DeAngelo & Ward, 2016; Santos, 2006). Other scholars have found a similarity, suggesting that the outcomes of informal contact between faculty and students in college also include having positive influences on career plans and educational aspirations, intellectual and personal development, academic achievement, and college persistence (Pascarella, 1980).

The outcome of interest to this study is career development and future planning. In short, the literature on mentees' career development strongly suggests that mentors can be pivotal in encouraging mentees to complete their degrees and enter their desired career path (Blackwell, 1989; Juarez, 1991). Additionally, researchers have found that students who engage in informal contact with faculty experience more confidence in their career or vocational choice than those who are low interactors (Wilson et al., 1975).

Role Modeling in Mentoring Relationships

Certain attributes of a mentor contribute to the value of the relationship with the mentee, one of which is role modeling. A role model is someone a mentee can look up to as an example of the success they hope to achieve one day, learn from their past and present experiences, and be inspired by (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Lockwood, 2006). Several researchers have recognized that

role modeling is a key attribute of a mentoring relationship (Klopf & Harrison, 1981; Roberts, 2000).

Gender & Mentorship

The extent to which a mentee resonates with and sees their mentor as a role model is greatly influenced by the gender makeup of the pairing (Lockwood, 2006). Prior research suggests that women experience more role-modeling and are more inspired by outstanding women mentors, thus indicating that women mentees may benefit more from same-gender mentoring dyads (Lockwood, 2006; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Soski & Godshalk, 2000). On the contrary, for men, gender was found not to influence the impact of role models (Lockwood, 2006).

Across prior research, there is disagreement on whether the gender of the mentee affects the mentoring functions received (O'Brien, 2010). Some authors have suggested that men mentees receive more career development (McGuire, 1999; Kober et al., 1994) and less psychosocial support (McGuire, 1999) than woman proteges. On the contrary, other studies have found no differences in the mentoring functions received (Noe, 1988b; O'Brien, 2010; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990).

Regarding psychosocial support, prior research has shown that women mentors provide more psychosocial support than men mentors (O'Brien, 2010) and that women mentees receive more psychosocial support than men mentees (McGuire, 1999; O'Brien, 2010). Additionally, Rhodes (2002) concluded that women desire mentors who provide psychosocial support in comparison to men who desire mentors who engage in activities with them.

Racial Significance in Faculty-Student Mentoring Relationships

Faculty-student mentor relationships can either be cross-cultural, where the faculty member and the student are of different cultural backgrounds, or same-culture, where both share the same cultural background. Previous studies have emphasized that college students benefit when student affairs staff are composed of people from various backgrounds to serve as role models (Freeman et al., 1993; Hurtado et al., 2008). Santos (2005) revealed that homogeneity in cultural background was an essential factor in the quality of student mentoring relationships. Students were more likely to identify same-culture mentors as role models because of similar values and an enhanced sense of supportiveness and connection with the university.

A study by Davis (2007) explored the experiences of Black student mentees from both HBCUs and PWIs who participated in a Summer Research Opportunity Program. The study found that Black students who had Black faculty serve as their mentors had some of the most beneficial impacts by seeing their mentors as real-life examples of Black students' potential to succeed in professional spaces (Davis, 2007). Another study yielded similar findings by suggesting that African American students demonstrate difficulty in connecting with White faculty at PWIs because they did not perceive them as realistic role models for themselves and perceived them to be culturally insensitive (Guiffrida, 2009). Furthermore, Black faculty have been found to share the same sentiment that a shared cultural background enhances mentoring (Reddick, 2011).

Faculty-Student Relationships at HBCUs

Previous research has shown that the environment of HBCUs has a significant impact on the academic motivations and outcomes of Black students. Black students attending HBCUs are found to exhibit significantly higher levels of academic motivation in comparison to Black

students at PWIs (Caldwell & Obasi, 2010; Cokely, 2003). Both Cokley (2003) and Freeman et al. (2021) found that being in an environment where Black students are surrounded by individuals with whom they identify and who they also see as successful has a positive impact on their internal motivations, and they tend to perform better academically as a result (Cokely, 2003; Freeman et al., 2021). In that way, the scholarship has focused on identifying how Black students achieve success differently at HBCUs than at PWIs.

Inclusive and welcoming environments cultivated specifically by Black faculty have been shown to be among the most significant contributing factors to students' success and feelings of inclusion on their campuses (Booker, 2019; Cokley, 2002). Students from both HBCUs and PWIS demonstrate greater satisfaction with their social environment and academic motivation and achievement when they have positive relationships with faculty (Allen, 1992; Cokley, 2023; Freeman et al., 2021; Golden et al., 2017; Komarraju et al., 2010). A study by Cokley found that students attending HBCUs reported that their professors were more likely to encourage their students to continue their studies than PWI students (Cokley, 2002). Freeman notes that these forms of positive relationships with faculty are the essential features of the HBCU climate and how it drives students to be successful (Freeman et al., 2021). Guiffrida (2005) introduces the concept of "othermothering" to denote the feeling that Black faculty may have of a moral obligation to attend to students' academic, social, and psychological development (Guiffrida, 2005). Essentially, a distinct feature of HBCUs that encourages student success is the nurturing mentoring relationships with professors. Faculty who are supportive uphold the intentional design of HBCUs to focus on Black students' personal and academic development, which subsequently creates racial and personal pride and promotes comprehensive character development (Freeman et al., 2021).

Contribution of Present Study

Faculty-student mentorship in higher education has been shown to influence and impact students' career development while in college (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Previous studies have almost exclusively focused on the role of gender in workplace mentoring or graduate programs. Very little research considers gender in college mentorship. Nonetheless, gender has been shown to influence general mentoring relationships. Additionally, both race and gender play a role in the extent to which mentees perceive their mentors as role models (Lockwood, 2006; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Santos, 2005; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Soski & Godshalk, 2000). Furthermore, as previous studies have demonstrated, a recurring beneficial outcome of mentorship is career support. Career support, goal setting, and future planning are the main attributes of a faculty-student mentoring relationship (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

These findings can have significant implications for how mentoring supports career development in institutions that vary in faculty and student demographics, such as HBCUs and PWIs. Specifically for Black students, this means that guidance from Black faculty can expose them to new career opportunities and provide them with greater self-confidence and understanding of their professional potential as a minority. Additionally, the current literature does not address Black women's undergraduate experience with mentorship for career development. This is important to address because mentorship has been attributed as a component that Black women lack as they attempt to grow in their careers (Beckwith et al., 2016). Black women are amongst the most underrepresented in leadership positions within the United States, holding just 4.0% of managerial positions and 1.4% of chief executive positions (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2021). Thus, this study will probe the undergraduate

experiences of Black women to gain insight into how they experience faculty-student mentorship for career development at HBCUs and PWIs.

Methodology

Data Collection

Through 14 semi-structured interviews conducted with Black women college graduates, I researched how Black women experience faculty-student mentorship for career development at two types of higher education institutions. Of the 14 interviews, seven participants attended an HBCU for college, and the other seven attended a PWI. As a result of snowballing recruitment, two PWI graduates were from the same school. Hence, the total number of PWI institutions represented was six, and the total number of HBCU institutions represented was seven. The rationale behind sampling from various PWIs and HBCUs and not performing case studies or narrowing based on specific criteria was to enhance the findings' richness, depth, and relevance. A variety of institutions allows insight into whether the culture and environments across HBCUs and PWIs are consistent. Essentially, considering various schools would give insight into whether all HBCUs and all PWIs are experienced the same way by Black women, which would impact subsequent policy recommendations. (See Appendix A for school demographics)

Participants were recruited through my networks on GroupMe and Facebook and through snowballing. The criteria for participants required them to identify as Black women who have graduated from either a PWI or HBCU within the past two to seven years. The selected time frame is appropriate because mid-level career experience is often around two to seven years. The time frame also allows participants to have enough experience navigating the career field to reflect on their career development in their college experiences. Additionally, participants are not

too far removed from college and will still be able to remember enough about that specific period. Participants ranged from a variety of academic disciplines and career fields. (See Appendix B for further participant demographic information such as graduation year, type of institution attended, degree earned, and career field)

The interviews were conducted via Zoom and, on average, lasted approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours. Participants consented to participation and the use of the Zoom recording feature before beginning the interview. The content of the questions asked in the interviews was split into four thematic sections: (1) Undergraduate Mentor Experience, (2) Undergraduate Career Guidance/Preparation, (3) Post-Graduation Transition, and (4) Current Career Status. The recordings were transcribed and coded for thematic analysis using Otter Transcription and MAXQDA Software. (See Appendix C for a complete interview guide)

Findings

The interviews conducted with 14 Black women who graduated from either a PWI or HBCU between the years of 2017- 2022 demonstrated that the demographic makeup of institutional environments impacts the initiation of faculty-student mentoring relationships, but the outcomes of the mentoring relationships are not affected by the institution's environment. Specifically, lack of representation can make Black women reluctant to initiate seeking guidance due to fear of discrimination. This finding was reflected through an analysis of the participants' experiences, which revealed four ideal qualities of a faculty mentor that are significant to the initiation, establishment, and outcomes of the mentoring relationships:

1. Shared identity
2. Sincere belief in potential to succeed

3. Honesty and Humility

4. Willingness to share experience

The shared identity of being Black women was found to be a preference for Black women in college seeking mentorship. A sincere belief in the potential to succeed is a quality required by both potential mentors who are Black women and those who aren't for the mentoring relationship to be established and progress. For a faculty mentor to meet the career development needs of a Black woman student in college, the mentor must demonstrate honesty, humility, and a willingness to share their career experiences. The participants' unique experiences at different institutions revealed the importance of identity-based representation on Black women's comfort with seeking guidance in predominantly white spaces. (See Appendix D for a summarized description of each participant's experience of engagement with faculty)

Quality 1- Shared Identity

Black Women's Unique Lived Experience

When seeking potential mentors in college, participants demonstrated preferring a mentor who shares the same identity as a Black woman because of the unique experiences Black women endure due to their intersectional identity. Participants stated that a primary quality of a mentor is someone who has already gone through similar experiences as them and whose experiences they can learn from. From a collective perspective, identity plays a significant role in an individual's lived experience. More specifically, the lived experiences of Black women are much different from others. Jada, an HBCU graduate currently working in the field of Social Work, made it clear that a mentor to her is:

> Somebody that has experienced what I've experienced, and it doesn't have to be identical, but has already gone through what I've gone through. Somebody that is doing being or on the journey of becoming something similar to what I want to be, do, or become, like I said, it doesn't have to be identical. But somebody that's in a

related field as me. Somebody that looks like me, preferably. Not taking away from any other race or ethnicity, but I just don't feel like I can look up to anybody that like, don't look like me, because our paths are different. And even though somebody like our paths are different issues. They look like me. So we experienced some of the same similarities. It's America.

In her acknowledgment of the fact that race and ethnicity play a role in life paths for individuals in the United States, she echoes the sentiments of other participants who also believed that their lived experiences as Black women are unique. Unique in the sense that Black women's intersectional identity of being two forms of a minority, both Black and a woman, makes them more susceptible to both racism and sexism in their career spaces. Rebecca and Ashley, PWI graduates who studied and pursued careers in STEM, both faced either fear of discrimination or having experienced discrimination because of being a Black woman in their field of study. Rebecca earned her undergraduate degree in biology and master's in public health and is pursuing her PhD in public health sciences. As an undergraduate, she was introduced to the harsh realities of being a Black woman in STEM. She recalls her time as a student, explaining that "as a Black woman in STEM, more often than not, I was the only Black woman in my science classes." Rebecca's environment invoked an internalized fear of being stereotyped due to being a Black woman in her field. She explains how being the minority in her classes impacted her behavior and her decision not to ask for help. "It felt like I had to be like the smartest person in the room, or I was going to be judged or stereotyped and categorized by others. Not only just students, but faculty as well," she says. Rebecca further notes the importance of representation on both a level of gender and race:

> In terms of what faculty portrayed, I think I had one Black professor in all of my STEM classes, and it was a Black man. And not to say that speaking with Black men is not helpful, it definitely is, but being able to relate to someone with multiple identities, I think can have a greater impact. So yeah, I think it was just that intersectionality piece of feeling not only judged for my gender, in STEM, but also for my race. Those two things were big.

Rebecca's predominantly white environment invoked an internalized apprehension to seek help due to the possibility of being stereotyped for being a Black woman in her field. Her apprehension was proven not have been an irrational fear because of what a fellow participant, Ashley, endured.

Ashley is another Black woman in STEM who reflected on her experiences as being one of few Black women in seas of white during her studies. Ashley graduated from a large PWI with her undergraduate degree in electrical engineering and PhD in electrical engineering and systems engineering from an Ivy League institution. As a postdoc, she attended an engineering conference of about 100,000 people and explained that it seemed like only about 10 Black women were present. At this conference, Ashley was approached by a random individual and recalled the moment, stating that "they were just like, Hey, aren't you the only Black woman here? We weren't even talking about identities." She reflected on this interaction, saying:

> It was just inappropriate. And as many people say things like that when they see me because it's like, I don't know, it's a shock to the system that I'm there. And now it's like, oh, let me ask the random, you know, racist, sexist, inappropriate questions that come to mind. Like, please don't, let's just like, let's just talk about robots.

Rebecca and Ashley's experiences as Black women in STEM reflect the unique and unfortunate realities of what Black women are at risk of facing while simply being present in their career spaces. The lack of representation and discrimination they faced was purely related to their identity and had nothing to do with them being more than qualified to succeed in the space.

The experience of being the only one is not exclusive to STEM professions. Claire, a PWI graduate pursuing her J.D., passionately shared that one of her professional goals is to eventually become a partner at the law firm where she will work after graduating from law school. She states, "If I were to make partner at my firm, I would be the first Black woman

partner who started at our firm and went all the way through." She earnestly notes the significance that still, in the present day, there are situations in which there is the first Black person to do something. Accordingly, Claire's path to determining her goals did not come without identity-based challenges. When she first started at her firm, a big thing that she dealt with was imposter syndrome. Her imposter syndrome culminated in feelings she describes as "I felt like I did not belong at the firm I was at. I was the youngest person in my class, I was one of the few Black people in my class, one of few Black women in my class. And it was just like, do I really belong here." Claire's feelings of imposter syndrome are a direct consequence of not seeing other Black women represented in her chosen career space.

Rebecca, Ashley, and Claire reflect on the challenges of being a Black woman in predominantly white career fields. Their lived experiences with discrimination and fear of judgment reinforce Jada's feelings that any other identity does not share a Black woman's path in America.

Preference for Black Women as Mentors

Black women participants' resonance with fellow Black women was shown to typically foster comfort and approachability for Black women in college to initiate the mentorship by asking for guidance. The importance of a mentor sharing similar experiences, specifically the unique lived experience of being a Black woman, with Black woman mentees is reflected in their initial preference for a Black woman to be their mentor.

Jordan, a PWI graduate who was very outward and intentional about seeking mentorship from diverse individuals, explained that "the most impactful were Black women. I think I naturally gravitated towards them because I was looking for that support and that nurturing." Jordan also later references a mentor who she used to call her "second mother" while in college.

Kayla, an HBCU graduate who studied Physical Therapy, also shared how important it is for her to find someone who looks like her when seeking mentorship. She states, "Having people that look like me, that I felt understood me, you know, that I feel like, you know, can relate to, it's a little bit easier to ask them for mentorship." The feeling of someone who shares the same identity as Kayla being more accessible to ask than someone who does not reflect the value of shared identity is also indicative of approachability. Although Rebecca attended a PWI and not an HBCU like Kayla, she still echoes the same sentiments about the inherent relationship between shared identity and approachability. She recalls the main challenge that kept her from building mentorship while in college: "I think it was a lack of exposure to people who I thought were approachable. Not having any professors that were Black women ever in my entire experience." Rebecca's experience is not unique to PWIs.

Chloe, an HBCU graduate who studied math, had no Black women professors who taught in her major while in college. Her feelings about this follow along the same lines as Rebecca as Chloe: "I do think I would have benefited from having someone to talk to and maybe if I had like a black teacher, that was a woman that I connected with, then I probably would have like, tried to talk to her more." Essentially, Chloe's desire to study math at her HBCU left her feeling unable to connect with her white professors who dominated her major. Claire had a different experience at her PWI as she had the flexibility to change her majors to study within a department that she felt would support her best. She initially considered majoring in political science but was drawn to educational and urban studies because she would be able to take many of the same courses as political science, but she would also have a lot of Black professors. She explains that she made this change to have more Black professors because "I knew that they would support me both in the classroom and just like, personally." This feeling of being supported in her personal

endeavors beyond the classroom and the approachability also extends from professors to career services departments.

Maddie, a PWI graduate, similarly experienced a time in college when she intentionally decided to seek guidance in spaces in which she saw herself represented. Maddie explains how she chose to utilize career services on her campus for the sole reason that one Black woman was employed at the center. She remembers how exciting the moment was: "I was like, Oh, my God, look at that, like, I see like a young Black woman working here, and is excelling. So that's literally the only reason I used it." For Maddie, she knew the young Black woman would be approachable, which subsequently led to her initiating asking for support with her resume and other career preparation resources.

Clearly, for some Black women in college, both at PWIs and HBCUs, there exists a preference for seeking support and mentorship from Black women. However, it is essential to note that the importance of the level of shared identity differs from person to person. Some Black women may be open to mentorship from anyone Black, man or woman, while others may believe that intersectionality is crucial to being able to foster meaningful mentorship. Ashley said, "Most of the time, I did try to find a black mentor. Whether women or men, just black mentors, because I felt like they would be the most likely to give me actually good advice." Claire similarly mentions how she "always kind of leaned on someone who is either a woman, I mean, ideally a Black woman, or next to that would be for me, someone who is Black." In a slightly different manner, Rebecca ensured to clarify that "not to say that speaking with Black men is not helpful, it definitely is, but being able to relate to someone with multiple identities, I think, can have a greater impact." Essentially, having a shared identity with the potential mentor makes Black women feel that the potential mentor is more approachable and that they will be

understood and treated with nurturing support. More specifically, Black women in college prioritize seeking mentorship from other Black women and secondly from Black men, which reflects the importance of racial homogeneity in mentoring relationships for these participants.

Quality 2- Sincere Belief in Potential to Succeed

Participants demonstrated that potential faculty mentors who share their identity and those who don't share their identity as Black women must demonstrate a sincere belief in the mentee's potential to succeed for the mentoring relationship to be established and progress to support career development needs. Although the preference for many collegiate Black women is a mentor who is a Black woman, the college environments may not allow for this to be possible due to the lack of representation of Black women faculty. At both PWIs and HBCUs, Black women have experienced a lack of representation of Black women in faculty positions both in the larger institutional as a whole and in smaller departments such as in their majors. When representation of Black women in college spaces is lacking, Black women undergraduates' intentionality in seeking mentorship can be impacted. Specifically, some Black women experience a reluctance to be intentional in fostering mentorship with individuals who do not share their identity due to fear of being judged, stereotyped, or mistreated because of their identity.

The experiences of some participants who attended PWIs demonstrated why the fear of judgment is significant to Black women students initiating mentorship with faculty in the college. For Rebecca, being the only Black woman in most science classes raised internalized feelings of needing to be perfect as a protection mechanism. She says, "I kind of had this idea in my head that I couldn't ask faculty for help" and "I felt like I had to be like the smartest person in the room, or I was going to be judged and stereotyped and categorized by others." As a result

of Rebecca's internalized fear of being judged for her identity, she chose not to seek help. In a similar vein, Maddie explains that she only used career services when a Black woman was employed there because the BIPOC students on her PWI campus all understood that their experience with the "old, white men and women" would not be supportive. She explained that she believed she would not receive appropriate career assistance from these individuals because there would be a "hyper fixation on [her] blackness, that [they're] not even looking at the whole picture" of the assistance she needs. She notes explicitly how non-Black women employed in career services would be solely focused on her name and whether her full name was appropriate because it was cultural in its sound and meaning, very different from that of a typical white person. Maddie explained how it was easier to be supported in what steps to take from fellow Black women:

> It was easier to talk to about them like, oh, you know, like, is it okay, if I put my full name? Or should I put my nickname? What, like, from your point of view as another black woman? What do you think I should do? What are the next steps and getting that deep insight of like, from a racial perspective of this because again, intersectionality, at the end of the day is what is key in like, the career world of next step, prepping? Because it's never just, Okay, here's you on a piece of paper. It's, here's you, and let's say in, break everything down, because it's never just you. It's always something more.

Overall, Maddie's experience shows that her apprehension to enter career service spaces and utilize the services intended to be supportive directly results from the lack of representation within the space.

Tiffany, an HBCU graduate, had a different experience with her career services office. When asked if she faced any challenges in accessing the career services on her campus, she responded that nobody faced challenges and that the institution's environment made students more comfortable seeking career assistance. Tiffany explained why students, including herself, felt more comfortable using career resources at her HBCU:

> When you know that you're not just the only one that looks like you that's going to show up in that room. It helps with not having imposter syndrome. Because you're like at least you're somebody who looks like me, and I know that we're both qualified to be in that room.

Tiffany's experience was different from Maddie's in that Maddie's PWI constructed an environment in which her identity as a Black student did not make her feel comfortable. On the other hand, Tiffany was in a space that made her comfortable because her identity was represented in that space. Thus, her intentionality in seeking assistance at her HBCU was not inhibited by any fear of discrimination based on her identity like it was for Maddie and Rebecca at their PWI, where they frequented more spaces with a lack of representation of people who look like them.

In the case that a Black woman student is reluctant to seek mentorship from faculty who don't share their identity, a demonstration of genuine care is required. In other words, for these types of students to overcome these barriers and seek guidance, potential mentors must acknowledge the importance of the Black woman student's identity and demonstrate genuine care for the student to succeed to open the door to make the student feel welcome.

Aaliyah, an HBCU graduate, mentioned that a white woman was one of her two primary mentors. Aaliyah claims that although they did not have much culturally to rely on, the professor's demonstration of care grounded the relationship. She says, "It was just the sincerity of her, like emotionally knowing that she cared about me. And knowing that she wanted to see me succeed. I think that played a role outside of race." Another participant from an HBCU, Jada, had a similar experience with an Indian woman professor who hand-picked her to go on a trip to do research in Ghana. Jada mentioned her supportiveness and that she provided one-on-one attention to discussing her future career goals. In these times, Jada says, "she poured a lot into me. And I think I know it's because she saw potential in me." In addition to Jada and Aaliyah,

who had meaningful cross-cultural mentoring experiences, Maddie also experienced this at her

PWI. She had a similar experience with her college mentor, a white woman whom she keeps in

contact with today. Although her mentor followed none of the qualities that Maddie was actively

looking for, she says:

> She saw me as a whole person, she made me feel like I am Maddie. And, you know,
> every day is a different day, every feeling is valid, like she was able to see all of that.
> I wish I could have had, like, a black woman do it. That was later in life. But in that
> moment, I was just looking for anyone to just see me as a whole person instead of
> little, it's bits of pieces of my identity.

It was her mentor's ability to see her for who she is in her entirety, validate her experiences, and

support her that allowed Maddie to have such a sincere relationship with her mentor, who was a

white woman.

Moreover, Black women in college can have other parts of their identity besides being

Black and a woman that further contributes to their college experiences. Ashley was a first-

generation student in college. As a result of socioeconomic disparities, she ran into the challenge

of not being able to afford an expensive textbook for her Russian course. Ashley discusses how

her Russian professor was "very supportive and welcoming" and "very aware of the

socioeconomic disparities that plague first-generation students." She recalls how her professor

demonstrated her genuine concern for Ashley's success when she was struggling to obtain a

book needed for class:

> And I remember the second year specifically, I could not afford it. And she, you
> know, told me to come to her office. And she basically was like, I think she gave me
> a book. And then she basically, printed out all the workbook worksheets. So, I had
> like a used textbook, and all the worksheets that we needed for the class for this for
> the entire year, she printed out so that I could do the work. So, because I just told her
> I can't afford it. I couldn't afford it. And she was like, the most supportive faculty
> member that I had. She also helped me get like a summer in like, Russian immersion
> program.

Understanding Ashley's circumstances and actively finding ways to ensure that she was given the chance to succeed in her class is the type of support that allows Black women to create mentoring relationships uplifted by intentional care, even with mentors of different identities. This idea of intentional care from the mentor reflects the importance of having the mentee's best interest at heart and believing in their potential to succeed. These qualities are so significant to mentoring relationships that even if shared identity is present, if the mentor does not demonstrate these qualities, then the relationship will fail. Ashley unfortunately experienced this when she asked her assigned faculty mentor, a Black woman, to submit a letter of recommendation on her behalf for graduate school. The assigned mentor failed to submit the letter of recommendation on time to one of Ashley's top choices for graduate school, which resulted in her application being deemed incomplete and her subsequent admission to the program being denied. Ashley expressed having felt extremely hurt by, she says, "especially being, you know, a fellow black woman in this field, that's very few of us. It just, it really did, like, hurt my feelings, because I really did expect better." This unfortunate experience is significant to the importance of the next ideal quality of mentorship: honesty and humility.

Quality 3- Honesty and Humility

An ideal faculty mentor was shown to be able to adequately support the career development needs of a Black woman mentee when the mentor demonstrated honesty and humility. Specifically, a mentor is expected to demonstrate honesty in the sense of holding the mentee accountable and humility in being cognizant of their limits, and just how much they can provide the mentee.

Christina, a PWI graduate, explicitly explained how honesty for her goes hand in hand with accountability. She says, "Sometimes that person that's gonna hold you

accountable. And you might not appreciate it in the moment, but you'll appreciate it in the

long run." This idea of appreciating genuine feedback that keeps a mentee accountable for

their actions to support them in achieving their goals was an essential aspect of another

participant's experience. Camryn, an HBCU graduate, recalls how one of her

undergraduate mentors followed up with her even after she graduated to ensure she was

still on the path to her goals of attending law school:

> After I had already been out of undergrad, he reached out to me, and he told me, it's time to get back in school. And I did actually get back in school. And he wrote my recommendation letter still basically feeding into me and like, comforting me but making sure that I'm doing the things that I need to do.

By holding Camryn accountable for her goal of wanting to go to law school but also

actively assisting in her journey to getting there, Camryn's undergraduate mentor reflected

the importance of honesty.

When it comes to humility, Kayla, an HBCU graduate, expressed how important it

is for a mentor to be humble in how they provide their guidance. She explains, "Being a

mentor, like at the same time, you have to be able to step back and have some humility, to

be able to, you know, be wise, you know, in your approach for your advice." Ashley echoes

this importance and captures how she believes a mentor demonstrates humility by knowing

their limits. "I think part of being a mentor is knowing your limits. And being like, Okay,

this, I have you until here, but you need to get here. And so let's see if we can find you

someone that can get you there." The ability of a mentor to acknowledge when they cannot

do something is critical to a Black woman's career development in college. An example of

how things can go wrong when a mentor lacks this trait is thinking back to Ashley's

experience of her assigned mentor being unresponsive and failing to submit her letter of

recommendation on time. Essentially, it's vital that a mentor acknowledges and is

transparent about what they can and cannot provide and subsequently directs their mentee to where they can receive the assistance that they need.

Additionally, humility allows faculty to be humanized in students' eyes, increasing approachability. Jada mainly explains that this ability to be comfortable with speaking to a professor is essential when serving Black students at HBCUs:

> It didn't feel like I was talking to my professor all the time. And I like that. Like I said, like, we're not friends, but I was very comfortable with speaking to them. And I think like sometimes a lot of people don't do that, because a lot of the professors won't allow them to come down a little bit like they kind of are on their high horses a lot. And it's like your students to me, and that's it. In some ways I understand it, in other ways, especially like at an HBCU where you're serving Black people, minorities, I think it's, it's so important to humanize yourself.

Jada's point about the importance of professors presenting themselves in a manner that is approachable for the sake of Black students is not unique to HBCUs. As explored earlier, approachability is critical in Black women's intentionality to seek guidance at PWIs. As discussed previously, Rebecca's STEM professors did not present themselves in a manner that allowed her to be comfortable asking for help. This shows how much faculty plays a role in cultivating welcoming environments for Black women students irrespective of whether the institution is an HBCU or PWI.

Quality 4- Willingness to Share Experiences

Participants from both HBCUs and PWIs indicated a shared desire to have been provided with exposure to different career pathways by faculty mentors willing to share their professional and career experiences. According to participants, it would have been most beneficial for them to have had mentors who were willing to explain how to navigate career pathways within their chosen discipline because of the faculty's depth of knowledge and expertise.

College institutions are filled with accomplished individuals who have a plethora of expertise. Jordan acknowledged how much she would have liked to learn from faculty outside of the classroom:

> What I wanted in faculty was a mentor and some type of guidance. These are supposed to be experts because they're supposed to be esteemed colleagues. These are supposed to be you know, industry leaders. I need to be directed of like, how I should be finding my expertise, what skills I should be building, where I should be investing in professional development opportunities, career pathways, navigating the workforce, understanding negotiations and salaries.

Many participants share her desires. Across all, the main form of support they wish they could have received to contribute to their career development while in college was exposure to career pathways. One significant way this can happen is through faculty sharing their experiences. As Tiffany puts it, she thinks it is important for faculty to be willing to share with students because "you're able to just kind of learn from their experiences, they're able to be open and vulnerable and share with you what worked and what didn't work. And then they are able to give you some advice on different steps that you should take." Brooke, a PWI graduate, specifically shared that learning from her professors' professional background would have been useful as she studied Business. "It would have been helpful to have teachers talk more about like their business backgrounds, considering I was someone who went into business, and more like career support" she says.

This idea of faculty going beyond teaching information to be examples of career routes is what Aaliyah was able to experience at her HBCU. Aaliyah studied public relations and took a course with a professor who owned her own public relations boutique agency and created a course specifically for event planning, which was useful to the world of public relations, as Aaliyah notes. This professor was a big inspiration for Aaliyah's career path. "I think she definitely inspired me and showed me that, you know, I don't have

to settle for certain things," she says to explain how influential her professor's entrepreneurial path was. Yet not all HBCU graduates felt like their professors met their expectations in how they should support their student's career development.

Camryn expected an increased level of engagement from faculty at her HBCU:

> I just expected the faculty to just be so much more engaged in helping you develop like your career path, or helping you develop what idea like or not idea, but the point of view of your career, like your perspective of where you want to go with your degree, like making sure you understand the options that you have.

She notes that in her experience, it was up to the student to initiate engagement with faculty members to "pick their brains or get some type of support." "I will say that was, like, a little disappointing because I chose to go to an HBCU," she explains. Thus, Camryn chose to attend her HBCU with the expectation that the faculty would be more engaging with students' career development from their side, and she was disappointed when this was not her experience. Furthermore, Camryn clarifies, "As a student, you would have to be what I call a go-getter and take the initiative to speak with faculty about what your interests are and what you're trying to do with your degree." Christina's experience at her PWI reflects this idea of a go-getter student. Christina was set on what she wanted to do with her career from the beginning of college to the end. Christina is the type of student Camryn may consider the "go-getter student," seeing as Christina says, "I felt pretty supported by faculty. But I feel like I also had to make a conscious effort to like, meet with them, follow up with them and just make sure that I was in like, constant communication if needed." Christina explains how she received career guidance from specific professors:

> It was kind of just up to me any questions that I brought to her so I think at one point, I was asking for internship sites and what she recommended and then also how to narrow down because specifically for marketing there's so many sectors that you can really go into. So, she was kind of assisting me with what I was interested in and what I could, like, narrow down into, what I would want to do.

Essentially, Camryn and Christina's experiences reflect how they both desired the same type of support from professors at their institutions, yet they did not receive the same level of support. This difference in their level of engagement with faculty in supporting their career development was not explicitly due to differences in the types of institutions. Instead, it was the difference in student behavior and whether the student was making a conscious effort or being a "go-getter" in seeking assistance from professors. It is possible that Camryn's expectation of being at an HBCU altered her behavior toward being a "go-getter" student. As Aaliyah, another HBCU graduate, states, attending an HBCU impacted her decision to seek mentorship. When asked if her identity played a role in her willingness to seek career support, she explained:

> So I think in terms of like, my identity, and going to an HBCU, sometimes it could be more of a, depending on your experience, but it could be more of a relaxed thing to not seek it and let it come to you. Because that was my experience. It just sort of naturally came to me and happened instead of me having to go out and seek it. And I think honestly, I do feel confident in saying because I was HBCU I feel like it was bound to happen. Like I feel like in our core, it's just a sense of like there's someone who is going to look out for you, essentially.

Furthermore, Rebecca was a first-generation college student studying biology. She explains how she believes she would have benefitted from being exposed to the opportunity of graduate-level education at the beginning of her college experience. More specifically, she explains that "less than 1% of PhDs are Black women" to emphasize further the importance of exposing Black women to different career pathways early on.

Overall, both HBCU and PWI graduates shared similar experiences of wanting faculty to be engaged in their career development by exposing them to different career paths from their expertise. The difference in participants' experiences depended on whether they intentionally initiated connection with faculty to receive that type of support.

Discussion

Based on the findings, Black women who attended both PWIs and HBCUs equally demonstrated experiences of success and failure in gaining career development support through informal mentoring relationships with faculty. It was evident that not all HBCUs foster an environment that promotes successful mentoring relationships, and not all PWIs lack the opportunity for Black women to have successful mentoring relationships. Yet, at PWIs, the predominantly white student and faculty demographic often results in Black women being one of few at the school and in their classes, which affects the way that mentoring relationships are initiated. However, the outcomes of the relationships are not affected by the institution's environment. Essentially, the quality of the individual relationships was not dependent on the type of institution but rather upon (1) the level of support exhibited by individual faculty members and (2) the personal disposition of participants who either did or did not make conscious efforts to ask for support.

From an analysis of the participants' experiences, I constructed a diagram of the required qualities of a mentor for Black women to receive adequate career development through mentorship (See Appendix E). The diagram is grounded in participants' perceptions of the ideal qualities that a mentor should demonstrate. The ideal qualities were extrapolated from participants' individual responses to the interview question, "How do you define someone who is a mentor?" and supported by the descriptions of the structure and progression of the individual mentoring relationships with faculty discussed in the interviews.

The main implication of the diagram is that when all qualities are met and demonstrated by the faculty mentor and when the mentee, a Black woman in college, makes a conscious effort

to seek guidance, then the mentee will more than likely receive the career development support that they desire from faculty mentorship at either type of institution, whether HBCU or PWI.

Policy Recommendations

The findings from the interviews suggest that although the experience of every Black woman in college is not the same, there is immense value in practices that acknowledge and uplift Black women's identity on college campuses so that all receive the support they need to achieve their goals. In particular, the findings from the interviews have significant policy implications for PWIs but should also be considered at HBCUs that do not currently do so. These recommendations are driven by the finding that PWI environments are more likely to inhibit Black women students from being able to initiate mentoring relationships to get the career support they desire.

Firstly, faculty should take notice and be sensitive to the experiences of Black women when they are the minority or the only ones who look like them in their classes. This should not be taken as a suggestion for faculty to demonstrate favoritism or unfairness but rather a suggestion for them to be considerate of how best to promote the well-being and success of all students in their classes. This essentially looks like faculty presenting themselves and engaging with students in a welcoming and approachable manner. Secondly, entire institutions and specific departments must show Black women that they are seen and are just as entitled to receiving guidance and be successful within their chosen career field or academic discipline just as much as any other peer. This is important to combat the feelings of imposter syndrome, inadequacy, and fear of judgment that may arise in Black women who study within disciplines that generally lack representation of Black women.

With these two policy implications in mind, there are a few ways in which undergraduate institutions can put this into practice. To encourage approachability and comfort in initiating contact with faculty, institutions should place an **emphasis or requirement on direct faculty engagement with student organizations**. Faculty demonstrating genuine interest in supporting students' extracurricular endeavors (which are often related to their desired career field) is a practical way to diminish the barrier of the power imbalance between students and faculty. This helps "humanize" faculty in the eyes of students and provides a space for initiations of mentorship to occur. Engaging with student organizations also makes sense because faculty can share their expertise with students in a space that does not detract from instructional time to reach the students who would likely appreciate the support.

The second recommendation is for institutions to diversify faculty and specifically **increase the representation of Black women within all departments**. The representation specification across all departments is essential to note because Black women in college have interests of all kinds, from humanities to STEM. For that reason, the departments focused on studies of race, culture, and gender should not be the only departments that hold the Black women faculty on campus. A key component for Black women to feel they can succeed in disciplines in which they are minorities is for them to see other Black women who have succeeded in those fields as role models. And if the employment of Black women faculty for specific disciplines is unattainable because only 4.4% of all doctoral degrees are earned by Black women (National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates), then schools must make a conscious effort to welcome back Black women alums to share their experiences in their respective career fields with current students. Black women in college should not have to change their major to other majors that employ Black women faculty, and those who do not have the

option to change majors should not be forced to endure the negative impacts of underrepresentation, such as imposter syndrome and loneliness.

Lastly, for formal faculty mentoring practices where faculty are assigned to be mentors to students, institutions must **ensure that the individual faculty members are fit to be mentors**. Shared identity alone is not enough reason to consider a faculty member a suitable mentor to a Black woman in college. Additionally, faculty who are forced into positions of being mentors and hold the title but do not demonstrate the required qualities of a mentor will more than likely fail to meet the career development needs of students.

Overall, although faculty-student mentorship is an individualized experience, and the quality and outcome of the relationship are dependent on the independent behaviors of faculty and students, both PWIs and HBCUs can take steps to ensure the environment positively impacts the initiation of these relationships by both faculty and students who are Black women.

Conclusion

Faculty mentorship is a valuable avenue for college students to receive career development support, as faculty are well-equipped with knowledge about their respective career fields. This study explored the experience of Black women college graduates of HBCUs and PWIs to find that Black women are at a disadvantage when it comes to engaging in faculty mentorship. College environments that lack representation of Black women across various disciplines can inhibit Black women students' intentionality in seeking career guidance, in turn limiting their chances of receiving the support they desire. Lack of representation of Black women in college environments such as PWIs may cause some Black women students to experience feelings of imposter syndrome and discouragement to seek help from fear of being

stereotyped and judged based on their identity. Furthermore, Black women identified four qualities that a mentor should demonstrate to meet their career development needs as undergraduates.

The proposed solution to this issue is to increase Black women's representation and the approachability of all faculty across various career disciplines at PWIs and HBCUs. I recommend three practical ways that higher education institutions can implement to create environments that ensure that Black women college students feel comfortable in initiating faculty mentoring relationships for career guidance:

1. Increasing direct faculty engagement with student organizations to diminish the power imbalance between faculty and students and encourage the approachability of faculty who are not Black women.

2. Increasing the representation of Black women across all disciplines by employing more Black women as faculty and acknowledging successful Black women alums.

3. Ensuring that individual faculty members are fit to be mentors by informing them of the best qualities to demonstrate when cultivating mentoring relationships with Black women.

Methodological limitations of this study include generalizability and self-selection bias. Because the study used qualitative semi-structured interviews, the findings are not generalizable to all Black women college students. Not all Black women may indicate the same four qualities for an ideal faculty mentor. Additionally, participants volunteered to participate during recruitment by filling out an interest form if they met the qualification criteria. This could lead to self-selection bias if all participants volunteered because something specific about themselves or their experience with undergraduate mentorship motivated them to participate. To build on the

findings of this present study, research should continue to examine the experiences of Black women graduates from more institutions than the ones looked at here. Future research should consider exploring specific Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives of individual PWIs to examine whether particular practices are better at increasing Black women students' comfort with engaging with faculty and feeling of representation on campus. Future research can also consider the experiences of Black women who are current college students instead of graduates. Current college students may have a different perception and approach to undergraduate mentorship than what is revealed by graduates who are reflecting on their college experience in hindsight.

Regardless of whether a Black woman attends a PWI or HBCU, they deserve to feel just as welcome as any other student to seek guidance as they navigate the uncharted territory that is their career journey. Essentially, higher education institutions, especially PWIs, should consider that Black women's lived experiences impact how they may be able to initiate faculty mentorship in environments that lack representation. Thus, to ensure that all Black women's career development needs are being met through faculty mentorship, there needs to be an increase in the acknowledgment of Black women's identity across disciplines on college campuses. Representation is crucial to show Black women in college that they are seen, valued, and capable of success in any career they choose.

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Appendix

Appendix A- Participant Demographics

*All names have been changed to maintain confidentiality

Name	Institution Type	Graduation Year	College Major	Graduate Degree	Career Field
Kayla	HBCU	2020	Kinesiology and Exercise Science	DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy)	Physical Therapy
Aaliyah	HBCU	2021	Public Relations	MS in Journalism	Journalism
Jada	HBCU	2020	Psychology	MSW	Social Work
Brittany	HBCU	2022	Health Science	Medical School, ND	Naturopathic Medicine
Camryn	HBCU	2020	Political Science	JD	Law
Tiffany	HBCU	2020	Business Administration	N/A	Business
Chloe	HBCU	2020	Mathematics	N/A	Marketing/Consulting
Rebecca	PWI	2021	Biology	MPH, PhD in Public Health Sciences	Health Science
Christina	PWI	2019	Marketing	MBA	Business & Marketing
Claire	PWI	2021	Education and Urban Studies Public Policy	JD	Law
Maddie	PWI	2018	Sociology, Anthropology, Health Science	MPH	Public Health
Jordan	PWI	2020	Health Care Administration	MPH	Health Care Policy
Brooke	PWI	2020	Economics	MBA	Business
Ashley	PWI	2017	Electrical Engineering	PhD in Electrical and Systems Engineering	Engineering

Appendix B- School Demographics

Name	Institution Type	School Size (Undergraduate Enrollment)	Faculty-Student Ratio
Kayla	HBCU	Medium ~6,500	18:1, 49.1% of classes < 20 students
Aaliyah	HBCU	Medium ~9,800	14:1, 45.5% of classes < 20 students
Jada	HBCU	Small ~3,500	17:1, 42% of classes < 20 students

Brittany	HBCU	Small ~2,400	11:1, 65.8% of classes < 20 students
Camryn	HBCU	Small ~3,100	8:1, 64% of classes < 20 students
Tiffany	HBCU	Small ~2,800	11:1, 53.2% of classes < 20 students
Chloe	HBCU	Medium ~4,900	11:1, 49% of classes < 20 students
Rebecca	PWI	Medium ~11,700	13:1, 40% of classes < 20 students
Christina	PWI	Large ~22,000	18:1, 34% of classes < 20 students
Claire	PWI	Medium ~8,100	7:1, 65.8% of classes < 20 students
Maddie	PWI	Small ~1,200	12:1, class size unavailable
Brooke	PWI	Large ~11,700	13:1, 40% of classes < 20 students
Jordyn	PWI	Medium ~7,500	5:1, 77% of classes < 20 students
Ashley	PWI	Large ~30,600	18:1, 46.5% of classes < 20 students

Appendix C- Interview Guide

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS
First, I'd like to get some basic information or make sure the information I have is correct.
- Your first name is _____, is that right?
- What college did you graduate from?
- When did you graduate from college?
- What is your favorite memory from college? Or what is your favorite thing about your college?

UNDERGRADUATE MENTOR EXPERIENCE
- Thinking back on your time in college, can you describe the level of support you felt from faculty members?
- Besides teaching and in-class instruction, in what ways did the faculty on your campus contribute to your undergraduate experience?
- Were there any faculty members who supported you throughout your time in college?
  - If yes, in what ways did they support you?
  - If not, what type of support would you have wanted to receive?
- What role did you feel like faculty was supposed to play in students' lives?
- Can you think of certain persons who were employed by your university besides faculty who supported you in college?
- As an undergraduate did you seek mentorship or guidance? Was this something that was important to you? Why or why not?
- Did your identity and the environment of your institution (being at an HBCU/PWI) influence your willingness to seek mentorship?
- Did you build any meaningful mentoring relationships with any faculty members while in college?
  - If yes, would you consider this person a mentor? Why or why not?
    - How would you define a person who is a mentor to you?
    - What made the relationship meaningful?
    - How did your relationship with this faculty member shift or change over time? What about after you graduated?
  - If no, why?
    - How would you define a person who is a mentor to you?
    - Would you say you had any sort of mentor in college even if they were not a faculty mentor?
    - Were there any specific challenges that kept you from building those kinds of relationships?

UNDERGRADUATE CAREER GUIDANCE/PREPARATION

- Did you make use of any career-preparation resources while on campus?
  - If yes, can you describe your experience with these resources? Were they selective programs, open programs, one time events, advising appointments?
    - How accessible were these resources? Did you face any challenges?
  - If not, why not?
    - Were there any challenges you faced in accessing them?
    - What type of career-preparation support would you have liked to receive?
- Did your identity and the environment of your institution influence your willingness to utilize career preparation resources?
- IF HAD A MENTOR: How did your mentor impact your career aspirations, if at all?
  - What other things, factors, or experiences impacted your career aspirations while in college?
- IF DID NOT HAVE MENTOR: What factors, things, or experiences impacted your career aspirations while in college?
- How did you career goals change through your time in college from start to end?

POST-GRADUATION TRANSITION
- Upon graduating, did you feel prepared to enter your desired career space?
  - If yes, what made you feel prepared? Describe any experiences or resources that directly relate to your preparedness.
  - If not, why did you feel unprepared? Describe any experiences or resources that directly relate to not feeling prepared.
- Did you feel supported as you graduated college? Why or why not?
- Did you have any expectations or hopes for what your life and career path would be like when you graduated?
  - (PROBE: What did you think you would be doing? Why do you think you expected that? How did your outlook compare with your parents' expectations or those of other important people in your life? Were your hopes the same as or different from your expectations? Why?)

CURRENT CAREER STATUS
Okay, so now that we've talked about your past experiences, let's talk about what things are like in your life today, at work and in your other professional pursuits.
- What is your current work situation – are you currently employed full-time, employed part-time, not employed, going to school, or something else?
  - If employed:
    - What kind of work do you do? How many hours a week is that?
  - If not employed:
    - Are you looking for work or on a leave or layoff from a job?

IF WORKING:
- What things did you learn or take away from your college experience that have helped you today in your career?
  - Probe: Did you ever receive advice on how to navigate your profession? What skills did you learn either through experiences or from others that help you navigate your profession?
- How do you see yourself progressing or growing in your workspace/profession?
- What challenges do you or have you experienced in your workspace/profession?
  - Do you face any challenges specifically to your progress or growth in the workspace/profession?
    - If so, what are they?
    - If not, what makes your workspace not have these challenges?
- When you encounter a challenge at work whether that be a difficult decision or a conflict, what do you usually do?
  - Probe: Do you handle the issue yourself? Do you seek guidance from others?
    - Who do you seek guidance from if anyone?

- What motivates you to overcome the challenge?

IF NOT WORKING:
- Do you want to be employed and in a career field at some point? Why or why not?
  - If yes, what has kept you from being able to do so up until this point?
  - What internal/personal factors have either aided you or hindered you, if any?
  - What outside factors have either aided you or hindered you, if any?
- How do you see yourself progressing or growing over the next few years?
- When you encounter a challenge in life whether in finding work or something else, what do you usually do?
  - Probe: Do you handle the issue yourself? Do you seek guidance from others?
    - Who do you seek guidance from, if anyone?
   - What motivates you to overcome the challenge?

<u>CLOSING</u>
- Are there any questions that you feel I should have asked or anything that you would like to add on?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D- Summary of Participant's Faculty Engagements

Name	Institution Type	Descriptions of Engagement with Faculty
Kayla	HBCU	Faculty members would notice if she was performing less than 100% and pull her aside to check in with her and encourage her that she could do better. She believes they said her potential.
Aaliyah	HBCU	She always felt comfortable to engage with faculty and ask them questions. She connected equally with two professors even though one was white, and one was black because they both made personal connections with her which made her feel more comfortable. They made is known that their doors were always open, provided words of affirmation, and went out of their way to make sure she did her best on assignments.
Jada	HBCU	There was a family feeling within the psychology department who allowed her to be open to sharing when she was struggling with something that affected her academics. She did feel like she had strong faculty relationships in the psychology department because she was involved but she was not super intentional about creating relationships with all her professors. She mentions non-black woman faculty who poured into her, saw her potential, and provided her with enrichment opportunities such as research in Ghana.
Brittany	HBCU	She had professors who would check in on her if she could tell she was down in class and had professors who she was comfortable contacting outside of class. She was not intentional about maintaining relationships after class ended. Her smaller school had less diverse faculty in terms of expertise so she did not connect with any faculty who could guide her to find her passion in naturopathic medicine.
Camryn	HBCU	She did not feel like she school was engaging from faculty side and to get support from professors, students had to take initiative. She expected more engagement from faculty with helping develop her career path. Two of her male professors were intentional with supporting her. One offered her w work study position, sent her opportunities, and wrote her letter of recommendations. The other poured into her by developing her writing skills and teaching her about the importance of networks.
Tiffany	HBCU	She experienced an immense level of support for her major specifically but notes that not all majors had the same experience. She notes that professors were supportive by giving different connections and being open to writing letters of recommendations. Additionally, she says

		there was diverse faculty but often felt more connections with the Black ones. She did not indicate any one faculty in particular who she had a relationship with because she said she was not intentional about following up and building the relationship. She leaned on her sister instead but said she probably would have gotten more support from faculty if she would have just followed up.
Chloe	HBCU	She initially did not feel much support from faculty because they seemed to prioritize students who were involved. She felt more comfortable talking to and asking about things towards her junior year when she became junior class senator. She did have more white professors than black professors because of her major and she felt like she couldn't relate to them on a deeper level. She acknowledges that she was also too nervous to seek mentorship and didn't ask for help.
Rebecca	PWI	She felt very minimal support from faculty and specifically in her major which was a Bachelor of Science in biology. Faculty was not presented as inclusive. She didn't get to office hours or ask for any help from faculty because of internalized fear of being stereotyped and judged even though this was important for STEM. There was no faculty involvement outside of class and she did not receive any guidance in her career path.
Christina	PWI	She felt supported by faculty but explicitly notes that she made a conscious effort to get the support. She heavily relied on office hours, meetings with professors, following up with them and asking specific questions. She had one Black woman professor show she built a personal relationship with and who was supportive outside of the classroom. She describes her as open, accessible, friendly, and wanting to help in any way that she could.
Claire	PWI	She felt supported by faculty because she intentionally changed her major to be in one that had more Black faculty. She specifically discusses a Black woman professor of hers who she instantly related to as a Black woman and because of other commonalities such as alma mater and sports interests. She had the opportunity to work under this professor as a TA and was guided by her. This relationship progressed to her seeing her professor as a career mentor.
Maddie	PWI	She believes there was lots of support available because of the small percentage of POCs and Black students so faculty "could not not support her". She clarifies that it was surface level support. She refers greatly to her faculty mentor who was a white woman who saw her for her whole identity. She says this faculty always made students of color feel comfortable coming to her and she always did more to support them. This mentor specifically influenced her to go into public health and cared for her on a deep level.
Jordan	PWI	She recalls having immense support from faculty rating the level of support 13 out of 10. She was very intentional about connecting with different professors to get support for all her different needs. She says she naturally gravitated towards Black women as mentors, but she was very open and sought mentorship from a diverse range of people.
Brooke	PWI	She felt a good amount of support but didn't experience It early on because she did not take advantage of office hours until third or fourth year. She believes the support was always there she just had to be intentional in taking advantage of it. She also notes that she cannot think of any ways that faculty contributed outside of academic and the classroom.
Ashley	PWI	She recalls not having a lot of support being at a large school in a large major. She had support from her Russian professor for her Russian minor but not an overall feeling of supportiveness from her engineering major. She notes that no faculty went above and beyond to recommend research seminars and opportunities. She also preferred Black mentors because she was skeptical about who she could ask for guidance as a result of being treated poorly by non-Black peers in STEM. As a result, she did not trust older, non-Black people in the STEM field. A significant experience she notes is having an assigned faculty mentor who was the only other Black woman in the department. She says she was useless because she had never taught her and although they initially had a relationship, the mentor failed to submit her letter of recommendation for graduate school which caused her to be denied. This was a very hurtful experience especially coming from another Black woman.

Appendix E- Findings Diagram and Explanation
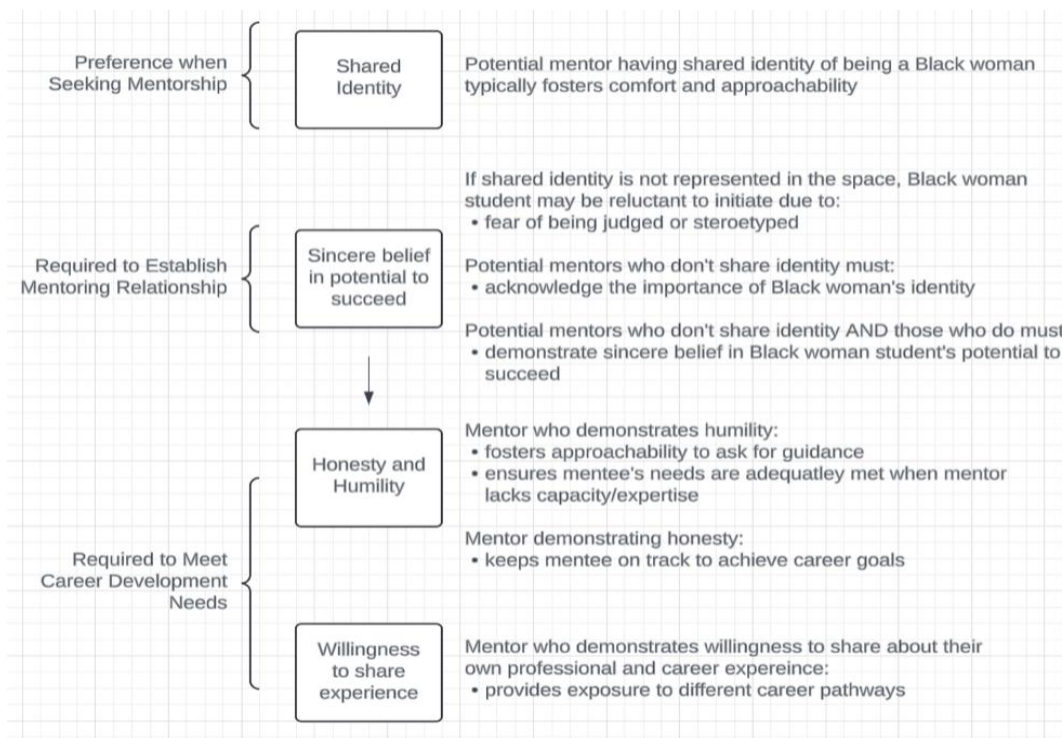
The diagram has four main qualities which are separated by three indications of purpose. The four qualities are (1) Shared Identity, (2) Sincere belief in potential to succeed, (3) Honesty and Humility, and (4) Willingness to share experiences. The first quality, shared identity, is a preferred quality many Black women hold as they seek mentors. A potential mentor who shares the same identity of being a Black woman is typically perceived being approachable. This level of approachability and comfort seeing in Black women is attributed to the unique lived experiences that many Black women share because of their intersectional identity. Thus, shared identity is a preference for collegiate Black women who seek mentorship, but it is not a requirement. The second quality on the diagram is for mentors to demonstrate a sincere belief in a mentee's potential to succeed. This quality is a requirement for the faculty member and student to establish a mentoring relationship. This quality is also significant because it mediates the reluctance to initiate that Black women students experience in spaces where they are not represented. More specifically, if Black women faculty are not represented in the space, then Black women students may feel reluctant to seek guidance out of fear of being judged or stereotyped for their identity. In this case, faculty who are not Black women yet who desire to support and be mentors to their students who are Black women must (1) acknowledge the importance of the Black woman's identity and the role it plays in her career development and (2) demonstrate a sincere belief in her potential to succeed. Furthermore, since this is a required quality, faculty mentors who are Black women must also demonstrate a sincere belief in the mentee's potential to succeed. The final two qualities are required for the mentor to meet the manatee's career development needs. The first of the two is honesty and humility. Mentors who demonstrate honesty, keep their mentees on track to achieve their career goals. Mentors who demonstrate humility foster approachability and ensure that the mentee's needs are adequately met if the mentor ever lacks capacity or expertise for a certain issue. Specifically, this looks like establishing a comfortable environment so that the power imbalance between faculty and student does not make them feel less than and redirecting the student to other resources that will better address certain needs if the mentor cannot. Lastly, is the quality of the

willingness to share experience. One of the biggest forms of career support that Black women wished they had while in college was exposure to different career pathways and faculty engagement to encourage this. Thus, to meet the final quality, a mentor must demonstrate willingness to share about their own professional experience and career expertise to provide Black women mentees with exposure to different career pathways.