Another strategy toward retention: Using counseling techniques to help Black faculty succeed in the academy

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Another Strategy toward Retention: Using Counseling Techniques to Help African American Faculty Succeed in the Academy

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ABSTRACT  Retaining African American faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) remains an issue of focus and concern. While researchers have investigated the institutional climate, mentorship, and social capital and their relationship with fostering a supportive campus environment for African American faculty, a dearth of research has used the counseling literature to discuss coping strategies that African American faculty can use to enhance their experiences and increase their success. The purpose of this essay is to focus on the relationship between cognitive interpretation and emotional and behavioral outcomes through rationale emotive behavioral therapy (REBT), the positive self-talk of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and spirituality.

KEYWORDS  African American, coping, faculty, predominantly white institutions (PWIs), retention, success.

Introduction

Over the last ten years, the U.S Census Bureau has predicted a change in the United States’ racial demography. Specifically, the bureau (2004) projected that the African American, Hispanic, and Asian American populations will increase rapidly over the next few decades. In fact, those populations will comprise approximately 50% of the total U.S. population by the year 2050, while the percentage of white Americans will decline. What implications will these trends have on the U.S. workforce, particularly the professoriate? One implication is clear: based on these predictions, it is likely that the workforce and professoriate will increasingly consists of ethnic minority groups. Consequently, it is important that researchers continue to examine factors relevant to the retention and success of minority faculty in higher education, particularly at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). While researchers have focused on the institutional climate and other institutional factors that facilitate success for minority faculty in higher education (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Kulis, Shaw, & Chong, 2000; Williams & Williams, 2006), a dearth of research has explored personal coping skills that African American faculty can adopt to help them succeed in the academy.
The purpose of this essay is to delineate coping strategies that African American faculty can employ to help combat some of the stressors and problems they experience in higher education. What makes this contribution unique is that the coping strategies discussed emanate from the counseling field. For example, we will discuss the following topics as effective coping methods for African American faculty: 1) the relationship between cognition and its impact on emotional and behavioral outcomes; 2) using positive self-talk for promoting resiliency, providing encouragement, and self-efficacy; 3) cognitive reframing, changing unhealthy thinking to positive thinking; and 4) spirituality as an effective coping method. To provide some contexts about African American faculty, this essay provides an overview of their experiences and challenges in higher education.

The Current Status of African American Faculty in Predominantly White Institutions: An Overview

Since the inception of higher education in America, African Americans have struggled to gain access and equity comparable to other members of the academy. Scholars and researchers alike over the years have investigated the status of African Americans in both two- and four-year PWIs and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to determine why large disparities exist between them and their majority counterparts (Fleming, 1984; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Harvey, 1999; Holmes, 2003; Jackson, 2001; Perna, Gerald, Baum, & Milem, 2007; Sedlacek, 1989; Watson, 2001). These research efforts produced valuable information that enabled the educational community to implement positive changes that have impacted the overall success of African American faculty, staff, and students in higher education. By the start of the twenty-first century, access to educational and employment opportunities in predominantly white institutions had improved considerably since the civil rights and black-power movements of the 1960s (Weems, 2003), but more changes are needed to achieve parity and ensure that a level playing field exists that promotes widespread equity and access for African Americans in higher education at all levels (Fields, 1998; Johnson & Pichon, 2007; Lindsay, 1999). So the struggle continues.

One group in particular that continues to struggle to reach parity with the majority group in higher education is African American faculty. Historically, only a small number were permitted to serve as faculty in PWIs (Fleming, Gill, & Swinton, 1978; Turner & Myers, 2000). The majority of them were and continue to be
clustered in HBCUs (Moses, 1997) and two-year community colleges (Johnson & Pichon, 2007). Today, while their overall rate of participation has increased at all academic ranks, African American faculty are still considered to be an underrepresented group when compared to white faculty in PWIs specifically and higher education in general (Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a subsidiary of the U.S. Department of Education (2007), is one of the primary sources for data on faculty trends in higher education. According to NCES records, African Americans comprised 5.2% (35,458) of the total 675,624 full-time teaching faculty1 employed by institutions of higher education as of the fall of 2005, compared to 78.1% (527,900) of white faculty members. To gain a full understanding of what these figures mean, consideration must be given to the representation of African Americans within the total U.S. population, which as of 2007 stood at 299,398,484 (NCES, 2007). Given that African Americans comprise 12.8% (38,323,005) of the population (NCES, 2007), institutions of higher education would need to increase the number of full-time African American teaching faculty by a factor of almost three in order to have equal representation in the total U.S. population. Thus the comparison indicates that African Americans are underrepresented in full-time teaching positions in higher education.

Concomitantly, if a prediction from a recent article published in the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2009) is accurate, it is highly unlikely that African American faculty will ever achieve parity comparable to their representation in the total U.S. population if immediate changes are not made. The article noted:

The U.S. Department of Education data shows that while blacks are increasing their numbers in holding faculty posts, the progress has been slow. More than a quarter-century ago, in 1981, blacks were 4.2 percent of all full-time faculty in American higher education. Today... the figure is 5.4 percent. If we project into the future on a straight-line basis, the progress for blacks in faculty ranks will not reach parity with the black percentage of the overall American work force for another 140 years.

Further, NCES (2007) data also indicate that at academic ranks such as assistant, associate, and professor, African Americans represent 4.9% (23,147) of the total 467,325 full-time teaching faculty positions, as compared to 79.8% (372,913) held by white faculty at the same academic ranks. When the data is desegregated by gender and race for specific academic ranks, women become the under-represented group in higher education. For example, full professors constitute 169,192 (25%) of the total 675,624 regular, full-time teaching faculty in academe as of the fall of 2005;
men account for 126,788 (75%) of full professorships, compared to the 42,404 (25%) held by women. More specifically, white men account for 109,128 (86.1%) and African American men 3,498 (2.8%) of the total (169,192) full professor appointments, compared to the 36,808 (21.8%) full professor appointments held by white women and 1,986 (1.2%) by African American women.

If you compare the percentage of African American and white women full professors with white and African American men, lingering gender inequities could explain the differences that exist at the full professor rank. However, when similar comparisons are made solely between African American and white women, factors beyond gender would be necessary to explain the disparity that exists between the number of African American and white women who hold regular, full-time professor appointments in higher education. Table 1 provides a comparative snapshot of African American and white faculty in full-time teaching positions within institutions of higher education as of the fall of 2005. The data indicate that a significant number of the faculty positions held by African Americans in higher education are tenure-track assistant professor positions, as opposed to tenured associate and full professor appointments (Turner & Myers, 2000; Williams & Williams, 2006).

Over the last few decades, there have been a number of special initiatives such as think tanks, symposiums, conferences, and research studies undertaken to discuss the status of African Americans in higher education. Many of these endeavors focus on improving recruitment and retention in PWIs, specifically because they often have the greatest difficulty in retaining faculty of color (Turner & Myers, 2000). In fact, it was humorously suggested that some PWIs had “revolving doors” (Bensimon, Ward, & Sanders, 2000), because faculty, staff, and students of color were leaving the institutions as quickly as they entered them (Phelps, 1995; Tinto, 1993).

However, changing demographics in the U.S. racial composition suggest that we are transitioning from a white majority-dominated society to one that will be more heavily populated with people of color (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008), so the status of African Americans and other groups of color (e.g., people of African, Hispanic, and Asian descent) in higher education is really not a laughing matter, but an issue of serious concern—particularly as members of these groups will be needed to sustain the U.S. workforce.

A review of the reports from the special initiative to improve the status of African Americans in higher education suggests that many of their concerns in PWIs are similar to those of all faculty; however, their experiences are often exacerbated by
the lingering effects of “isms” (i.e., racism, sexism, and classism) that have pervaded many social institutions in America (Esty, Griffin, & Hirsch, 1995; Turner & Myers, 2000). Some of the most frequently cited concerns of both male and female African American faculty in PWIs include feelings of loneliness and social isolation, tokenism, blatant and subtle forms of race and/or sex discrimination, hostile work environments, unrealistic role expectations, lack of academic support, lack of networking opportunities with majority colleagues, and limited access to certain academic disciplines. Moreover, some faculty have even reported being criticized because their research agenda focuses too much on minorities, equity, or diversity issues (Aguirre, 2000; Blackwell, 1996; Burgess, 1997; Caldwell & Stewart, 2001; Higginbotham, 1994; Holmes, 1999; James & Farmer, 1993; Moses, 1997; Smith, Wolf, & Busenburg, 1996; Turner & Myers, 2000; Watson, 2001; Williams & Williams, 2006). Holistically, the concerns suggest that factors inherent within the institutional environment place exorbitant psychological stress upon the group, primarily because each element is outside of the individual’s locus of control and therefore cannot be remedied exclusively by a change in the person’s behavior. The environment must change as well.

Further, when the group is desegregated by gender and the concerns of African American faculty are viewed individually, their overall experiences still seem to be re-
lated to issues on how race, class, and/or gender construct the lives of African Americans in society broadly and higher education specifically. To provide a sense of the day-to-day reality of some African American faculty at PWIs, selected narratives are provided in the appendix from various research reports. The statements bear witness to how some African American faculty feel about the chilly campus environment and being the “lone ranger” in predominantly white settings, minority-related service expectations, promotion and tenure issues, classroom concerns, and sexism. It is important to bear in mind that while the appendix’s narratives may provide insight into the faculty experiences of other African Americans, they should not be perceived to represent or explain the experiences of all African American faculty in PWIs.

This section has provided information to illustrate the current status of African American faculty in PWIs. The next continues the discussion by offering strategies that can be used by African American faculty to combat the psychological toll that often occurs from being a minority in higher education.

Rationale Emotive Behavioral Therapy

Brief Overview of the Therapy

African American faculty can use tenets of rationale emotive behavior therapy (REBT) to help them cope with and combat some of the stressors and problems experienced at PWIs. Albert Ellis, a clinical psychologist and one of the pioneers in underscoring the relationship between cognition and behavior, founded REBT in the mid-1950s (Beck & Weishaar, 2000; Ellis, Shaughnessy, & Mahan, 2003; Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, Saunders, Galloway, & Shwery, 2004). Since its inception, Ellis has published more than 60 books and 700 articles on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which is the psychotherapeutic home in which REBT is affiliated (Dryden & David, 2008; Ellis, Shaughnessy, & Mahan, 2003). Initially known as rationale emotive therapy (RET), Ellis changed the name to REBT because of his viewpoint that the “model had always stressed the reciprocal interactions among cognition, emotion, and behavior” (Corey, 2000, p. 395; Dryden & David, 2008; Ellis, 2000; Ellis, Shaughnessy, & Mahan, 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2004).

Ellis’s early experiences aided him in developing REBT; during his youth, he was troubled by a fear of public speaking. As a way to combat his anxieties, he developed “a cognitive philosophical approach combined with an in vivo desensitiza-
tion approach” and engaged in homework assignments that motivated him to speak in public regardless of his discomfort (Corey, 2000, p. 395). Ellis also had a fear of meeting women, so he employed behavioral techniques to overcome his timidity. According to Ellis (1996), as cited in Corey (2000, p. 395), he made “verbal overtures to 100 different women sitting on park benches in the Bronx Botanical Gardens, got rejected for dates by all of them (one woman kissed [him] in the park, and made a date for later that evening, but never showed up).” These actions helped him overcome his fear of public speaking and talking to women.

For part of his psychoanalytic training, Ellis engaged in three years of analysis. When he began his practice of psychotherapy, he adhered to the traditional format of psychotherapy: “putting his patients on the sofa and proceeded with them in a decidedly orthodox psychoanalytic way” (ibid.). Despite some positive outcomes, Ellis searched for other techniques to increase his therapeutic efficacy. As such, he began to deviate from his training in a more classical psychoanalysis and “became more of a neo-Freudian therapist” (ibid., p. 396). Nonetheless he was still dissatisfied with the outcomes, so he began to challenge his clients to engage in the very things they were afraid of doing, “such as risking the rejection of significant others” (ibid.). He gradually became more active and directive as a therapist, and because of his eclecticism and use of humanistic and behavior therapy, his groundbreaking efforts have earned him the distinction of being hailed as the father of REBT and viewed as a major contributor to CBT (ibid.; Dryden & David, 2008; Ellis, 2000; Ellis, Shaughnessy, & Mahan, 2003). Ellis also credits the influence of existentialism on the formulation of REBT.

The Premise of REBT

REBT is premised on the assumption that people have ingrained rational and irrational tendencies and learning. According to REBT, people, to a large extent, consciously and unconsciously construct emotional difficulties through their irrational and self-defeating thinking, emoting, and behaving (Corey, 2000; Dryden & David, 2008; Ellis, 2000; Ellis, Shaughnessy, & Mahan, 2003). A central premise of REBT is to help people understand that when unpleasant and unfortunate events occur, they have a choice through their cognitive interpretation of the event to make themselves feel healthy, positive, and optimistic, or unhealthy, horrified, terrified, panicked, and depressed (Corey, 2000; Ellis, 2000).
Some Basic Concepts of REBT are as follows:

1. Thinking, feeling, and behaving happen concurrently and influence one another.
2. People often think in a manner that supports their interests as well as those in their social groups.
3. When events that people deem unfortunate occur, typically they create irrational beliefs about these events, which are characterized by absolutist and inflexible thinking. “Typically, these irrational beliefs are centered on competence and success, love, and approval, being treated fairly, and safety, and comfort” (Corey, 2000, p. 397). These unfortunate events themselves do not lead to emotional disturbances; rather, it is the irrational beliefs that one ascribes to them.
4. People have the ability and foresight to counteract self-defeating ways by being aware of how their beliefs negatively impact them. With this awareness, they have the ability to challenge their irrational thoughts and thus change them into more rational beliefs. By doing so, people change their unhealthy feelings and self-sabotaging behaviors.
5. Once irrational beliefs are discerned, they can be challenged by using an arsenal of cognitive, emotive, and behavioral modalities. REBT offers a variety of techniques that people can use to help abate their self-defeating thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
6. In REBT, people must take responsibility for their troubled thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Concomitantly, they must also dedicate themselves to working diligently to engage in the hard work that it will take to change.

REBT’s ABCD Theory

Central to Ellis’s REBT theory is the ABCD model of personality and emotional disturbance (Dryden & David, 2008; Ellis, Shaughnessy, & Mahan, 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2004). The ABCD model posits that when people have an emotional reaction, it is not caused by the event itself, but rather by one’s belief system or how they interpret or perceive that event. In other words, while most people think that (a), the activating event, causes (c), the emotional and behavioral outcome, it is actually (b), one’s belief system, that triggers (c). If one understands the cohesiveness among cognition, emotion, and behavior, then one can engage in (d), disputing irrational beliefs (Corey, 2000; Dryden & David, 2008; Ellis, 2000; Ellis, Shaughnessy, & Mahan, 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2004).

To better understand this, let us discuss the ABCD model in the context of African American faculty at a PWI. For example, if an African American faculty member working at a PWI has a belligerent encounter with a white colleague in their academic department, typically this event (a) might cause (c) the faculty mem-
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ber to become upset. In the context of the ABCD model inherit in REBT, Ellis would argue that the event (a) did not cause (c) the emotional and behavioral outcome, but that the faculty member’s belief system (or how he/she interpreted the event) (b) caused (c) the emotional and behavioral outcome. For example, after the encounter with the colleague, the faculty member might think that his/her colleague’s behavior was indicative of the departmental climate: that of being hostile and unwelcoming toward African Americans. Realizing that there is an interconnection between cognition and emotional and behavioral outcomes, the faculty member may try to dispute (d) these thoughts so as to have a more positive impact on his/her emotions and behavior; that is, instead of thinking that the colleague’s behavior is indicative of the overall climate in his/her department, the faculty member may refocus his/her cognition by saying, “Gee, that person is really having a bad day!” Better yet, the faculty member could elect to think, “This person is ignorant or has some serious issues.” Disputing thoughts in this manner will be inextricable to the faculty member’s emotional and behavioral outcomes. Whereas, the first model of thinking provided in the initial example may have caused the faculty member to isolate him-/herself, the latter model in the second example allows him or her to view his/her colleagues through the context of their idiosyncrasies.

Another example to consider in the context of the ABCD model is this: an African American faculty member teaching a class that is predominantly populated by white students. Throughout the semester some of the white students make remarks that are deemed insensitive, which causes the professor to become angry—say, for instance, when the faculty member is discussing HBCUs and some white students make stereotypical remarks about them. Again, while traditional psychology would consider that the event triggered the faculty member’s emotional or behavioral outcome, Ellis would argue otherwise, that his/her belief system or how he/she interpreted the event triggered the outcome. For example, let us assume that upon hearing the students’ remarks, the faculty member thinks to him-/herself that they are symptomatic of the discriminatory sentiments of the university, or he/she may think that the students are attacking his/her race or ethnicity. Using the ABCD model of REBT, Ellis argues that it is the faculty member’s interpretation of the event that shapes his/her emotional or behavioral response. Therefore, to challenge these negative interpretations of the situation, the faculty member would need to dispute the thoughts by, for example, convincing him-/herself that the comments
may not be a direct attack against his/her race, but instead reflect ignorance about HBCUs. Again, refocusing cognition in this way will facilitate a change in emotional and behavioral outcomes.

Summary

To summarize, REBT posits that there is interrelatedness among cognition, feelings, and behavior. In a sense, REBT—particularly the ABCD model—explains that we can control our emotional and behavioral outcomes based on our belief system, or the cognitive interpretation we ascribe to events. Consequently, it is not the event itself that shapes emotional or behavioral outcomes, but rather our interpretations of those events. African American faculty can apply the ABCD model to enhance their experiences at PWIs and increase their opportunities for success.

Cognitive Therapy

Similar to Ellis’s REBT, cognitive therapy falls under the psychotherapeutic domain of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Much like REBT, cognitive therapy emphasizes that the problems and difficulties we encounter are engendered by faulty or irrational cognition. As such, the purpose of cognitive therapy is to help people develop skills for modifying beliefs and identifying distorted thinking, which will prompt a change in behavior. Over the years, cognitive therapy has been used in conjunction with tenets of behavioral therapy. Thus many people have come to associate cognitive therapy with CBT. In a more clinical nature, psychotherapists who specialize in CBT work collaboratively with clients to devise plans to test their beliefs. For example, say someone has a fear of driving at night because of being afraid they would get into an accident; the therapist and client might therefore devise a plan to test the client’s assumption. Testing the client’s cognition helps him/her to recognize their faulty logic.

Cognitive therapy emanated from Aaron’s Beck research on depression (Beck & Weishaar, 2000). Schooled in psychoanalysis, Beck set out to test Sigmund Freud’s theory of depression “as having at its core ‘anger turned on the self’” (ibid., p. 267). To corroborate this formulation, “Beck made clinical observations of depressed patients and investigated their treatment under traditional psychoanalysis” (ibid.). Rather than discovering what he initially set out to find, Beck noticed a “negative bias” in patients’ thought processing. With continued observations and testing, he developed the framework of his theory. As noted above, the work of Albert Ellis
significantly influenced Beck’s theory of cognitive therapy, which, again, came to be known as CBT. Both Ellis and Beck espoused the notion that people’s cognition contributed to their difficulties. Aside from Beck and Ellis, the works of contemporary behaviorists have contributed to the development of CBT, among whom are Albert Bandura, Michael Mahoney, and Donald Meichenbaum.

Self-talk

One major element of CBT, which African American faculty at PWIs may find beneficial in enhancing their experiences and success, is awareness of self-talk and its implications for behavior. Hardin (1999) defines self-talk as inner dialogue that people have with themselves, which helps interpret the world and their relationships to it. He posits that some people are aware of their self-talk and others are not. He gives an example of self-talk as the criticisms, and in some cases the praises, that we tell ourselves. An example of a criticism, or what some would characterize as “negative self-talk,” is when we tell ourselves that we are “dumb for making that mistake or asking that question,” either thinking or speaking it (Gibson & Foster, 2007). Hardin explains that we are analogous to news commentators in that we comment on our every move, decision, and events in our lives.

Hardin states that while a person may not be cognizant of their self-talk, they will certainly feel the emotional consequences of it. Metaphorically, he compares this experience to “seeing the aftermath of a tornado without having witnessed the tornado itself—you still feel the devastation and the fear of something powerful having been there” (1999, p. 125). Aside from CBT emphasizing the importance of being aware of self-talk, particularly negative self-talk and understanding the relationship it has with emotional and behavioral outcomes, there are some actions that African American faculty members can engage in to mollify the negative self-talk.

Becoming Aware of Negative Self-talk

The first thing that African American faculty members can do is to be aware of the relationship between negative self-talk and its impact on their emotions and behavior. Most people do not realize the relationship between their internalized dialogue and how it affects their experiences. Aside from awareness, other strategies include:

1. Journaling: Faculty members might try to get into the habit of carrying around a journal to record negative thoughts. Recording their thoughts in this way will
allow them to have a tangible record of them that they can then review with the
goal of detecting patterns. Not only does journaling help in recognizing the nega-
tive self-talk and its manifestations, but it also provides an effective mechanism
that will aid in changing self-defeating thoughts into more positive ones.

2. Thought-stopping: When faculty members find themselves conjuring negative
thoughts, they can learn to say aloud to themselves, “Stop!” Hardin points out
that learning to reduce negative self-talk is important, because “the more negative
the talk about your values, your abilities, or your potential, the lower you will find
your self-esteem and the more insecure you will be about making choices” (1999,
p. 141). Not only will saying “Stop!” have a stronger impact than thinking it, it
will also increase our awareness of how many times we had to stop negative
thoughts, and when. Hardin advises that before we engage in thought-stopping,
we first need to be able to replace negative self-talk with healthy, positive self-
talk—a process also known as “cognitive reframing.” To do this, Hardin recom-
mends that we take time to develop a list of positive responses that can be used
to replace the negative ones.

3. Rubber-band snap: Another thing that faculty members might consider in trying
to reduce negative self-talk is to wear a rubber band on their wrist. When they
become aware of their own negative self-talk, they can use the rubber band to
inflict a slight sting on their wrists. While this will hurt, its purpose is to make
them more cognizant of their negative thoughts and thus help stop them.

4. Using self-talk to engender determination and persistence: We discussed replacing
unpleasant or negative self-talk with positive self-talk, a process referred to as
cognitive reframing. Not only can faculty members replace negative with positive
self-talk, but they can also use self-talk to encourage resiliency and a “can-do”
attitude.

Summary

Over the years, cognitive therapy has been used in conjunction with behavioral
therapy. Consequently, tenets of these two psychotherapies have merged, resulting
in CBT. Similar to REBT, cognitive therapy, or CBT, underscores the relationship
between cognition and emotion and behavioral outcomes. One tool from CBT that
African American faculty can use to enhance their experiences and increase their
success is by displaying an awareness of the interrelatedness between self-talk and its
impact on emotional and behavioral outcomes. Self-talk, or internalized thematic di-
alogue, can be positive or negative. We have outlined a strategy that faculty mem-
bers can use to monitor and mollify their negative self-talk.
Spirituality

Spirituality is “being connected with one’s complete self, others, the entire universe, and a higher power” (Rodgers & Dantley, 2001, p. 591). Van Ness (1996) distinguishes between two types of spirituality, religious and secular. While Van Ness notes that secular spirituality is not bound by organized religion, he says that religion and spirituality may be connected. This present discussion of spirituality is in the context of religion, because of the historical and contemporary importance of religion in the lives of African Americans (Du Bois, 1935/1997; Foner, 1983; Lawson & Thomas, 2007; Meier & Rudwick, 1970). Historically, religion has provided stability, support, and hope for African Americans, and religious institutions remain important to African Americans today (Lawson & Thomas, 2007).

Extensive research has shown that African Americans use prayer as a positive source; for example, a study of how people coped after the 9-11 terrorist attacks revealed that African Americans, as compared with other racial and ethnic groups, used prayer to manage the trauma of those events (Constantine, Alleyne, Caldwell, McRae, & Suzuki, 2005). Research by Klonoff and Landrine (1996) corroborates this finding by stating that a significant number of African Americans believe in the healing power of prayer as compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Furthermore, Taylor and colleagues (1996) report that approximately 50% of African Americans encourage others to pray for them daily. According to Lawson and Thomas (2007), a large number of African Americans as well as others use prayer to communicate with God.

A large body of research has shown that African Americans use spiritual practices and religious beliefs to cope with chronic illness. Specifically, African Americans use prayer to cope with breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, and to recover from alcohol and drug addiction (Banks-Wallace & Parks, 2004; Bourjolly, 1998; Lawson, 1998; McAdoo, 1995). Similarly, Dalton (2001) notes that a person’s spiritual relationship with a higher power might shed light on how they not only approach their career decisions, but also on how they make long-term commitments about service to others, family life, and community involvement. African American faculty can use spirituality, particularly prayer or another form of communication with a higher power, to help alleviate their stresses, struggles, frustrations, and loneliness that often result from working at PWIs.
Conclusions

With the rise of ethnic minorities in the United States and the predicted population decrease among white Americans, there will be more minorities on college campuses, in addition to the gradual increase of minorities comprising the professoriate. Consequently, while researchers have investigated the institutional climate, mentorship, and social capital and their interrelationships for fostering a supportive campus environment for African American faculty members, there has been a lack of research focusing on the coping strategies available to them for enhancing their experiences and success in PWIs. This essay contributes to the literature by discussing coping strategies from counseling therapies such as REBT and CBT and from spirituality. Hopefully, African American and minority faculty members will find the information presented here necessary tools to enhance their success in PWIs.

Appendix:

Selected Narratives from African American Faculty in PWIs

Tokens and Targeted Hires

A female faculty member said: “I started in my institution [during] fall 1993. The first year I was a temporary person, and [in] fall 1994, I became a tenure-track assistant professor. I knew that I’d been hired as a diversity appointment to expand the number of minorities in the department. As a result, I didn’t go through the whole inter-process. The reason they said was, ‘We know your records, and we need you to diversify the department’” (Holmes, 1999, p. 160).

Another female faculty member said: “While they technically expanded to have me in the department, I don’t think there was a lot of consideration given for my personality. Not do I think that there is a lot expansion given for viewpoints that fall outside of the majority—the majority being White male in their 50s. I’m glad to have been [there] because I think it makes a difference for students in the department. But the fact that I am the first non-White hire in my department since its existence says a lot about the department. And they don’t seem to be aware of the implications of having been all White and mainly male” (Holmes, 1999, p. 161).

Campus Climate

A female faculty member said: “The college was very chilly. There’s the typical thing that happens when people don’t feel you came through the ranks. They thought that it was a top-down move to get me in this campus. . . . A lot of faculty
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didn’t feel like they had voted for me. So, the first year was hands-off. There were a lot of people who just didn’t know what to make of me. . . . So, I got jerked around a lot, swept aside” (Turner & Myers, 2000, p. 104).

A male faculty member said: “A lot of times, when I expressed dissatisfaction at the hiring rate—that, I think, appalling hiring level of people of color, the conditions and the atmosphere for minorities at the school—people look at me with a puzzled look and say, ‘Well, I thought you were happy. We didn’t know you felt like that.’ So it’s almost as if they’ve been looking at me as an honorary white person, or honorary European, if you will. And all the while I thought I was expressing me [sic] as a unique African American individual there” (Turner & Myers, 2000, pp. 104–105).

Promotion and Tenure Concerns

A male faculty member said: “There are a number of obstacles facing African American male faculty in navigating the promotion and tenure process. First, there are few role models, other scholars to emulate. Having a senior, tenured scholar who has traveled the course at my particular University would be an invaluable resource” (Williams & Williams, 2006, p. 208).

A female faculty member said: “I just finished my review and it was very stressful. My teaching is considered fine, but I’m not getting the academic publishing done. I’m supposed to get a book published. That means I’ll have to go further underground and just come up to teach my class, and maybe do a couple of other things. And I really feel angry that there are not more Black faculty because if there were, not just at the assistant professor level, but people with tenure, then if somebody like me wanted to just sit in their lab and work, they could” (Holmes, 1999, p. 175).

Another female faculty member said: “I was denied [tenure] on the fact that I wasn’t here long enough. And one of the [white] faculty had been here one year less than I had. They were granted promotion. . . . So the next year I applied for promotion again and was denied” (Turner & Myers, 2000, p. 89).

Another male faculty member said: “One of the major issues that African American male faculty face in navigating the promotion and tenure process is not being clear as to what is needed to get P&T. What I mean is how many articles are needed? How important are book chapters, if at all? Grants and contracts? In my experience it’s the ‘hidden agenda’ and the issue of ‘fair’ play that bothers me the most” (Williams & Williams, 2006, p. 208).

Another female faculty member said: “I think doing so much service cost me
negatively in my academic professional career when it came time for promotion. I'm not tenured. My main area of deficiency, and I shouldn't say the word deficiency, but I deal with reality, was published research. It's been interesting because when I first came on campus, I felt as if I was the university's private documentation for minorities. I was on every committee, council, whatever, you name it. So the service component of my professional life far exceeded the other components. Teaching is my first and only love, and those two areas were first and research was secondary. But when it was time for my review, the research component became primary. So that's what got me. I was very disappointed because the university used me in the service area, but when I needed the university, the university didn't come through for me. I felt like I should have been tenured, because a person can't do everything, and the kinds of things I was doing, I [should] have been granted it, but the university said, 'No.' I will resubmit my portfolio again in the fall because I've done what was suggested” (Holmes, 1999, p. 163).

Service Roles: Community and Academic

A male faculty member said: “African American faculty at my institution tend to be in demand within the local community (this may be because we are so few), from speaking at churches and schools to helping design a survey of providing feedback and direction for a community project. However, the service that we provide isn't recognized and definitely not rewarded by our institution. A support system that captures that aspect of service and integrates it within the promotion and tenure process would be ideal” (Williams & Williams, 2006, p. 305).

A female faculty member said: “When I first started at my institution, I was probably on every committee, and I attended every meeting. I was just everywhere. Many times I was the only Black person on the committees and a lot of times the only Black at the activities. I became a pioneer, sort of an ethnic pioneer” (Holmes, 1999, p. 163).

Another female faculty member said: “I mean, I am a female and African American. Needless to say, I got used. . . . I was doing a lot of things in terms of serving on this board, serving on that board, being faculty advisor for one of the professional fraternities. . . . In retrospect, since I didn't get tenure, neither the department chair or dean said, ‘Okay, well, this is what you're lacking.’ . . . I basically had to find my own avenues” (Turner & Myers, 2000, p. 108).

Another male faculty member said: “After my first year on the tenure clock, I re-
flected upon the amount of time I spent serving the university or my department and reviewed the formal document that divided, in percentages, my responsibilities toward research, teaching and service. Then I realized that my department chair didn’t have a clue of the extra amount of informal time I spent mentoring African American undergraduate and graduate students, in addition to white and other students of color” (Williams & Williams, 2006, p. 301).

Another male faculty member said: “Far too little credit is given to black male faculty (and other faculty of color) for mentoring students of color. I spend several hours a week as the token member of my faculty department mentoring students of color from various departments who want to talk about issues that are unique to our experiences” (ibid., p. 300).

**Lacking Direction and Mentorship**

A male faculty member said: “My first year out, I was really feeling lost, isolated, and in a figurative way, visually impaired. I couldn’t see or find my way and I didn’t feel comfortable turning to my ‘new colleagues’ for help. If I had the benefit of a mentor, a senior, battle-tested colleague who I knew was sensitive to my reality, cared for my personal and professional growth, and was there to serve as a sounding board and a guide, I probably would have been more productive in terms of scholarship, a better instructor, and more adept at getting out of some of the service assignments that took up a lot of my time” (ibid., p. 304).

A male faculty member said: “It is very helpful, if not crucial, that nontenured faculty have someone to guide them and take them under their wing. Publishing is difficult enough and the situation is compounded when there’s no support or guidance” (ibid., p. 298).

**Classroom Politics**

A female faculty member said: “In the classroom, the race thing is always there. So, I have to be very careful of not jumping to conclusions about what students may think about me in my mind. Because there is a part of me that says, well, I guess this is what happens in a university that is whatever percent White. So, I try to hold off a bit because otherwise I would go into a fit, [and say] ‘On no, I’m stuck in this class with all of these conservative White kids.’ But I realize that that is also a part of the job that I do here, too” (Holmes, 1999, p. 173).

Another female faculty member said: “Let’s put it like this, if a white male pro-
Professor says something that’s wrong in class, my observation is that even if the students perceive that it’s wrong, they may say something outside of class, but they hesitate to challenge a 50+ white male professor. They feel quite comfortable challenging an African American woman in class, and I find that . . . I just think it’s society and the way that they’re brought up and the way that they perceive people” (Turner & Myers, 2000, p. 110).

Another female faculty member said: “Regarding interactions with students, there’s a different expectation for us when we walk in as a minority; they automatically assume that we know less than our colleagues in the same department . . . it doesn’t matter whether it’s undergraduate level or graduate level . . . They challenge females more . . . So, I wear dark, tailored suits and I am very well prepared. They don’t hire us unless we’re prepared anyway but students think we are here because of our color” (ibid.).

Notes
1. The composite of full-time faculty include professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, and other.
2. See Holmes (1999), Turner and Myers (2000), and Williams and Williams (2006) for full citations pertaining to these African American faculty narratives.

References
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