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## Diversifying the 'HSI bubble': Black and Asian women faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Elena M. Venegas

*The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley*, [elena.venegas@utrgv.edu](mailto:elena.venegas@utrgv.edu)

Jacqueline B. Koonce

*The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley*

Lorenza Lancaster

Julissa Bazan

Adriana Garza

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## **Diversifying the “HSI Bubble”: Black and Asian women faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions**

### **Abstract**

This qualitative case study explored the experiences of seven Black and Asian women faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). The unique experience of each woman is shared in this paper. Three themes highlight the interconnectedness of participant experiences. The first theme indicated that these Black and Asian women faculty operated in unsupportive microclimates within their HSIs. Secondly, participants communicated a need for representation within the “HSI bubble.” Finally, our participants felt as though their HSIs needed to exercise greater intentionality in terms of truly serving their student populations. Amongst the implications of this research is a better understanding of the experiences of a minority group (i.e., Black and Asian women faculty) within higher education. These experiences can inform administrators on how to move beyond recruitment of Black and Asian women faculty to foster a supportive microclimate so as to retain these women and enable their success.

*Keywords:* Black and Asian women faculty, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Critical Race Feminism

## Introduction

As of fall 2018, Hispanic-Serving Institutions comprised 17% (i.e., 539) of U.S. higher education institutions (*Excellencia in Education* 2020). A Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) receives that designation based on an enrollment of at least 25% Latinx undergraduate full-time equivalent students (Cuellar 2019). Since 2009, the number of HSIs has increased by an average of 30 institutions per year (Alvarez McHatton, Schall, and Sáenz 2020). An additional 352 institutions are ‘emerging HSIs,’ defined as those with a 15% to 24.9% Latinx student population (*Excellencia in Education* 2020).

Higher education has long sought to diversify its faculty in terms of race and ethnicity (Kim and Cooc 2020; Moreno et al. 2006; Turner, González, and Wood 2008). Retaining and promoting women faculty is another longstanding issue (Clark and Corcoran 1986; Johnsrud and Des Jarlais 1994; Perna 2001). The intersections of race, gender, and faculty status can compound the experiences of women faculty of color (Jackson et al. 2020). As Crenshaw (1991) wrote, ‘Because of their intersectional identity as both women *and* of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one *or* the other, women of color are marginalized within both’ (1244).

Tenured and tenure-track women faculty of color are truly a minority within a minority in the U.S. (Gonzales and Terosky 2020; Jackson et al. 2020; Kelly and McCann 2014; Pittman 2010). As of fall 2017, White faculty comprised 76% of full-time faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions (National Center for Education Statistics 2019). Table 1 conveys that women faculty of color comprise a minute percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty within the U.S.

Table 1. Women faculty of color by rank.

| Race/Ethnicity          | Assistant Professor | Associate Professor | Professor |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Asian/Pacific Islanders | 6%                  | 5%                  | 3%        |
| Black                   | 4%                  | 3%                  | 2%        |
| Latinas                 | 3%                  | 2%                  | 1%        |

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. 2019. *The condition of education: Characteristics of postsecondary faculty*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

Thus, women faculty of color may face marginalization as ‘the “Other” because of how they differ from both the White and male norm around which the academy was built’ (Kelly and McCann 2014, 683). Even when higher education strives to implement institutional-level diversity initiatives,

they tend to view diversity as a stand-alone policy that is conceptualized as the adding of students or faculty of color to the existing makeup of the institution and do not address the fundamental Whiteness of the university’s policies and practices (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 560).

The need to diversify faculty is not limited to predominantly White institutions (PWIs), however. ‘HSIs’ organizational structure and compositional diversity of faculty and staff most often mirror that of [PWIs]’ (Abrica, García-Louis, and Gallaway 2020, 56). Given the increasing prevalence of HSIs in the U.S., their faculty diversity is just as concerning as that of PWIs.

Vargas, Villa-Palomino, and Davis (2020) contended that while higher education claims to promote equality, the opposite is maintained through ‘high student of color to faculty of color ratios’ (41). In 2015, the California State University system enrolled approximately 40% Latinx students, yet White faculty comprised 54.3% of Assistant Professors, 59.2% of Associate Professors, and 68.4% of Professors within the system (Contreras 2017). The ratio of White faculty to White students at HSIs is 10 to 1 whereas the ratio of Latinx faculty to Latinx students

at HSIs is an astounding 146 to 1 (Vargas, Villa-Palomino, and Davis 2020). Thus, Banda, Flowers, and Robinson (2017) argued, '[PWIs] are not the only institutions that should be scrutinized for their lack of faculty diversity' (251).

Our qualitative case study explores the microclimates in which Black and Asian women faculty operate at HSIs. *Microclimates* are 'the smaller distinct spaces individuals operate within on college campuses' (Serrano 2020, 2). The prevalence of Latinx faculty at HSIs is debated. Some scholars assert that Latinx faculty are underrepresented at HSIs (Abrica, García-Louis, and Gallaway 2020; Contreras 2017; Cuellar 2019; Vargas, Villa-Palomino, and Davis 2020), more prevalent than at PWIs (Delgado-Romero et al. 2007), or that the data on faculty demographics at HSIs is too vague (Banda, Flowers, and Robinson 2017). Given this discrepancy, we studied Black and Asian women faculty as we postulated that their hypervisibility (Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson 2019) at HSIs might further nuance their experiences. Moreover, some of our participants revealed that they received differential treatment than their Latinx colleagues. Furthermore, our participants' counterstories juxtapose the dominant White and/or Latinx narrative(s) at their respective HSIs.

Our study addressed calls for further research concerning faculty of color at Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) (Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson 2019; Turner, González, and Wood 2008), women faculty of color (Kelly and McCann 2014; Pittman 2010; Turner, González, and Wood 2008), and the intersection of race and gender (Abrica, García-Louis, and Gallaway 2020) amongst faculty (Kim and Cooc 2020). Furthermore, our study addresses the intersection of race and gender, which is not always accounted for in research regarding faculty of color (Jackson et al. 2020). Our study is novel in focusing on Black and Asian women faculty at HSIs whose intersection of their race and gender lends itself to hypervisibility at their institutions.

### **The Intersection of Race/Ethnicity and Gender amongst Faculty**

Academia is ‘designed and shaped by the experiences of White, middle-class, heterosexual, cis-men’ (Gonzales and Terosky 2020, 274). At each rank, White men are overrepresented meanwhile the representation of women faculty of color decreases as rank increases (Kim and Cooc 2020). Thus, hiring women faculty of color is considered advantageous because their dual identities address the need to diversify faculty in terms of both race/ethnicity and gender (Comer et al. 2017).

Yet ‘women faculty of color face additional challenges, including discrimination related to gender as well as race—the double bind syndrome’ (Stanley 2006, 705). Being a woman and being of color is a dual burden inherent with challenges such as invisibility, isolation, self-doubt, covert racism, and marginalization (Nuñez, Murakami, and Gonzales 2015). Women faculty of color are often seen first in terms of their visible identities instead of as valued members of the academy (Marbley et al. 2011). This speaks to the hypervisibility of women faculty of color (Johnsrud and Des Jarlais 1994; Turner, González, and Wong 2011). Hypervisibility ‘is associated with heightened scrutiny and surveillance where failures are magnified and individuals lack control over how they are perceived by others’ (Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson 2019, 63). Yet women faculty of color are simultaneously invisible (Guillaume and Apodaca 2020; Marbley et al. 2011) as they are denied ‘recognition, legitimacy, authority, and voice’ (Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson 2019, 63).

Oftentimes, women faculty of color find their ‘capabilities as scholars’ (Comer et al. 2017, 149) are minimized. Scholarship produced by faculty of color is delegitimized through *epistemic exclusion*—‘the combined impact of formal institutional systems, or established systems for the evaluation of scholarship, and individual biases in determining what knowledge

is valuable and who is deemed a credible contributor to knowledge production' (Settles et al. 2020, 10). Women faculty of color tend to 'view their work as inherently personal' (Gonzales and Terosky 2020, 279). Thus, their epistemic exclusion is especially disheartening.

Kachchaf et al. (2015) asserted women of color 'contend with being more visible, more isolated, more excluded, and more likely to confront various forms of race/ethnicity and gender inequality that structure her profession' (177). Crenshaw (1991) described workplace discrimination against Black women, in particular,

[M]any of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately (1244).

Kachchaf et al. (2015) described stigmatization that Yvette, a Black female faculty member in an engineering department, faced:

Even returning back to work one week after giving birth was not enough to prevent her department chair from questioning her work ethic. [Yvette shared,] "He said, 'I haven't seen you around much. And your maternity leave doesn't start until next fall'"(186).

Yvette's experience denotes that academia is not immune from workplace discrimination against women of color. Given the intersectionality of race/ethnicity and gender amongst our participants, we interpreted the data collected for this study through the lens of Critical Race Feminism.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) helped us better understand the experiences of our participants, Black and Asian women faculty employed by HSIs. Originally coined by Richard Delgado (Wing 2015) and elaborated upon by Wing, CRF examines the contexts of women of color from racial and gender standpoints. CRF 'emphasize[s] the legal concerns of a significant

group of people—those who are both women and members of today’s racial/ethnic minorities’ (Wing 2003, 1).

CRF emerged after mainstream feminism, Critical Legal Studies (CLS), and Critical Race Theory (CRT). A need for CRF arose from homogeneity within feminist perspectives, which assumed White women and women of color share the same gendered experiences (Evans-Winters and Esposito 2010; Hines-Datiri and Carter Andrews 2017). European post-modernists Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault influenced CLS, which ‘use[s] a deconstruction methodology to challenge the conception that law is neutral, objective or determinate’ (Wing 2015, 162). CRF agrees with this methodology but argues against race and gender hierarchies in particular. Thus, CRF scholars believe that CLS failed to recognize the ‘identities of women and people of color’ (Wing 2015, 163). CRF draws greatly from CRT which exposes ‘narrow approaches to providing social and economic justice’ and addresses ‘sociolegal racial issues’ (Wing 2015, 163). However, CRF scholars critique CRT for essentializing the treatment of people of color (Wing 2015). ‘CRF constitutes a gender intervention within CRT by noting that men of color may face different kinds of discrimination to their female peers’ (Wing 2015, 164). Collectively, mainstream feminism, CLS, and CRT excluded the identities and voices of women of color (Evans-Winters and Esposito 2010; Roberts 2019; Wing 2015).

Designed for women of color, CRF is a theoretical framework free of essentialism through its recognition that there are differences even within a race or gender. In our study, for instance, participants share some racial backgrounds, but their experiences are varied based on intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991). This speaks to the anti-essentialism tenet of CRF (Berry, 2010). According to Hines-Datiri and Carter Andrews (2017), ‘CRF builds upon intersectionality



theory to understand the antiessentialist plight of women of color' (10) by recognizing that their lived experiences may not 'conform to an essentialist normative female voice' (11).

CRF 'takes into account the multiple, interlocking systems of oppression that affect women's lives and social status in ways typically overlooked' (Roberts 2019, 112). '[CRF] focuses on the lives of women of color who face multiple forms of discrimination, due to the intersections of race...and gender within a system of White male patriarchy and racist oppression' (Evans-Winters and Esposito 2010, 20). By exposing encounters related to their race and/or gender, CRF thereby combats the tokenism some women faculty of color experience (Turner, González, and Wong 2011)

CRF moves beyond theorizing about the experiences of women of color. Enacting a critical race praxis (Berry 2010; Wing 2003) is part of CRF and can be accomplished through the use of storytelling techniques that counteract dominant discourse. Counterstories reveal 'master narratives that dominant groups use to justify the racial subjugation of Others' (Han and Leonard 2017, 117). Although Thurgood Marshall is widely-respected, Anita Hill (2003) shared her counterstory with respect to his work from her perspective as a law professor and Black woman. Hill (2003) wrote, 'As an African American woman, I am a member of two categories of persons who have been historically and presently victimized by the discrimination Marshall fought against' (101). Fiction and nonfiction have been used by Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Patricia Williams to share important truths about people of color (Wing 2015). We use nonfiction counterstories to (a) honor our participants' voices; (b) affirm that their experiences as Black and Asian women faculty at HSIs may differ from those of men of color, White women, and Latinas; (c) reveal how Black and Asian women faculty may experience oppression due to

the intersectionality of their gendered and racial identities; and (d) combat racial and/or gender oppression at HSIs.

## **Methods**

This qualitative case study addresses two research questions: (a) *What are the experiences of Black and Asian women faculty at HSIs?*; and (b) *In what ways do the experiences of Black and Asian women faculty inform HSIs on how to recruit, retain, and support them?*

According to Stake (2006), ‘qualitative case study was developed to study the experience of real cases operating in real situations’ (3). For our study, a case is defined by ‘a culture or subculture ([e.g.,] African American women in academia)’ (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2020, 26).

### **Sampling and Participants**

We recruited participants via an email listserv and employed a combination of purposeful sampling procedures. In qualitative research, ‘purposeful sampling...means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study’ (Creswell 2013, 156). We utilized criterion-i purposeful sampling as our participants ‘[met] some predetermined criterion of importance’ (Palinkas et al. 2013, 17). The criteria for participation in this study were: (a) self-identify as a woman; (b) self-identify as Black or Asian; and (c) current or previous employment at an HSI as tenured or tenure-track faculty.

Seven Black and Asian women faculty across three HSIs participated in this study. Pseudonyms are used for each participant and HSI. Given the sensitive nature of this research, we described each HSI in Table 2 using only a range of the percentage of Latinx students enrolled.

Table 2. Demographics of Participants and their Respective HSIs.

| Participant | Race  | HSI         | Latinx student population |
|-------------|-------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Astrid      | Asian | Serendipity | 75-100%                   |
| Aubree      | Black | Fuller      | 50-75%                    |
| Chaundra    | Black | Serendipity | 75-100%                   |
| LaShawn     | Black | Fuller      | 50-75%                    |
| Mahogany    | Black | Fuller      | 50-75%                    |
| Preetha     | Asian | Serendipity | 75-100%                   |
| Zora        | Black | Astin       | 25-50%                    |

### Data Sources

We received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct this study. Yin (2014) considered interviews as integral to case study research. We conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant. ‘Semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided’ (27) through a combination of closed-ended, open-ended, and follow-up questions (Harrell and Bradley 2009).

We piloted the interview questions with a Black woman faculty member employed at an HSI who did not participate in this study. We revised our interview protocol with her input. We asked participants questions from our finalized interview protocol. Our interview protocol included questions (e.g., *how have [other faculty and administrators at your HSI] received you as a professor in general and/or as a woman faculty of color?*) that purposefully reflected our

participants' intersectionality and CRF. Interviews, conducted via Zoom, ranged from 41 to 69 minutes in duration. We audio- or video-recorded each interview to ensure the accuracy of responses (Yin 2014). Some participants preferred not to be video-recorded for fear of potential repercussions. For this reason, we interviewed each participant only once.

Each participant functioned as a subcase (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2020). A case may have subcases embedded within it (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2020; Stake 2006). The inclusion of seven subcases enhances the robustness of our case study. Each embedded subcase merited its own unit of analysis (Yin 2014) described below.

### **Data Analysis**

In conducting within-case analysis, each researcher employed the process of descriptive coding for each subcase. 'A descriptive code assigns labels to data that summarize in a word or short phrase...the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data' (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2020, 65). Each researcher wrote descriptive codes that emerged during within-case analysis. Collectively, we then engaged in data reduction to select key data as the focal point(s) that emerged from within-case analysis (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2020).

CRF influenced our data analysis. We looked for counterstories to the dominant narrative (Han and Leonard 2017). In keeping with the antiessentialist tenet of CRF (Hines-Datiri and Carter Andrews 2017), we present each participant's counterstory as a vignette. In this way, each told her own story, and the heterogeneity of their counterstories is reflected. We (and our participants) see dissemination of this work as a means of enacting critical race praxis in the hopes of contributing to systemic change at HSIs for Black and Asian women faculty. Finally, CRF reminded two of the authors to examine our own conceptions as tenure-track women

faculty of color in conjunction with the participants' understandings. Thus, member checking (Stake 2006) was essential to developing a thorough understanding of our participants' experiences.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as requirements for establishing the trustworthiness of data analysis. To enhance the credibility of data analysis, we conducted *member checking*, 'a vital technique' in which participants read a draft 'for accuracy and possible misrepresentation' (Stake 2006, 37). Thick, rich description enhances transferability (Merriam 1988), or relaying the study's contextual factors, participants, and research process to enable the reader to 'transform information to other settings' (Creswell 2013, 252). We maintained an audit trail, a detailed record of the research process, to address dependability (Morrow 2005). '*Confirmability* (vs. objectivity) is based on the acknowledgment that research is never objective' (Morrow 2005, 252). We acknowledge our potential biases below to enhance the confirmability of this study.

### **Researcher Biases**

There are several limitations to this study. The first is the limitation of recruitment and participation in this study to faculty who self-identify as women and Black or Asian. This limitation resulted from purposeful sampling as we sought to explore the experiences of a minority (i.e., Black or Asian faculty) within a minority (i.e., female faculty) at HSIs. To address this limitation, we are currently conducting a similar study to explore the experiences of Latina faculty at HSIs. A second limitation of this research relates to the plausibility of researcher bias. Each author self-identifies as a woman of color, and three of the authors are women faculty of color.

### **Findings**

Findings from this case study are presented below in two parts. First are the findings that emerged from analyzing each subcase. These findings are the counterstories of the Black and Asian women faculty who participated in this study. Second, we discuss three overarching themes that emerged from data analysis.

### **Each Woman's Counterstory at her Respective HSI**

Each woman's counterstory at her respective HSI is shared below, in alphabetical order, as a vignette.

#### ***Astrid***

Astrid's research agenda influenced her decision to work at an HSI. In Astrid's field, research tends to focus on White experiences. Astrid wanted to encourage other people of color to pursue a career in her field in which people of color are in the minority.

At her HSI, Astrid experienced feelings of appreciation and exclusion. When asked about her interactions with students Astrid expressed,

I can say that my best experience here is with my students. They acknowledge my differences and always want to learn about it. They always ask me about [my] culture and traditions. Last semester one of my students even wrote in my mid semester evaluation, "I am lucky to have you as my professor. I feel the fact that you are from another culture has done some "aha" moments for me to reconsider some of my biases." And I kind of think, "Yes, it is very important." Because many of our students never have seen like somebody from the area that I am from. So they may have less misconceptions about people that are from that area.

The interactions between Astrid and her students made her feel welcomed and encouraged her to help them whenever possible.

Although she had positive experiences with her students, Astrid's interactions with her colleagues were sometimes negative. Astrid recalled,

[This] happened to me several times...we were in a table with a small group of people. Like maybe three or five people. And I was sitting in the middle of two people and suddenly they started to speak Spanish to each other and totally ignored me...This is not very welcoming and polite when you have a colleague from another language that you know she cannot understand you.

Such negative experiences made Astrid feel like an outsider.

### *Aubree*

After realizing that Fuller is a MSI, Aubree was initially excited. That excitement waned, however, as she described,

Originally my thought was that by being in front of the class I could serve as an example—that underrepresented people can do...[quantitative-heavy] disciplines, which I am in, and encourage them just by example, but I just actually haven't found that to be the case.

Instead, Aubree encountered sexist attitudes from students. These ranged from microaggressions, such as referring to her as 'Ms. or Mrs.' despite being told that the proper way to address faculty is as *Professor* or *Dr.*, to blatant acts of disrespect. One semester, a male graduate student began unwantedly and repeatedly visiting Aubree's office to express displeasure with his grade. This caused Aubree to begin avoiding her office.

Aubree experienced a lack of institutional support to combat students' sexist attitudes. Aubree described her attempt to address these concerns with her department chair, 'He stated, "What do you want me to do about it? How do I solve this?"' Aubree's department chair then delegated finding a solution to her. Aubree recounted, 'And I thought... "I don't have time to figure out how to deal with this discrimination. I think it's probably showing up on my teaching evaluation."... We just sat there, and we did not solve it—just let it be.' Sexism, colorism, and a lack of institutional support in addressing these issues pervaded Aubree's experiences at her HSI.

### *Chaundra*

Chaundra has always been interested in studying the Latinx population, the local community surrounding her HSI, and Latinx culture. She is intrigued as to how this population sees the world and wants her health sciences program to focus on treating and serving Latinx people. Chaundra's goal is for her program to lead in this area.

Yet Chaundra encountered stereotypes and prejudice at her HSI, which resulted in her feeling like an outsider. She likened such experiences to those she endured as a student at PWIs. Chaundra shared that negative course evaluations reflected such stereotypes and prejudice, 'It isn't explicit, but it's implied. They have a problem that I am African American and a woman on top of it.' However, Chaundra mentioned that negative comments on course evaluations don't affect her emotionally. Chaundra remarked, 'That's reality. I've had to live with this. It's part of my upbringing. The world will look at you because of color.'

In contrast, Chaundra's interactions with other faculty and administrators at her HSI are generally positive. She is well-received by colleagues who want her at Serendipity. She's overheard colleagues speak of her admirably and says she is respected. Chaundra and her colleagues work well together. Chaundra believes that she has been accepted by other faculty and administrators since she had been at Serendipity for quite some time.

However, Chaundra stated her HSI lacked representation in not only its student population but also administration. She believes more could be done in terms of recruiting non-dominant voices to Serendipity. Chaundra stated, 'It isn't part of the fabric of the institution, and it should be, which is sad...[Administrators] just don't think about it...Minority voices are needed and females.' Chaundra desires for her program to produce more health care professionals of color. However, Serendipity primarily pursues Latinx students, almost to the exclusion of other races and/or ethnicities. Thus, Chaundra feels that her HSI operates in a



‘bubble.’ According to Chaundra, the tendency to almost exclusively recruit Latinx students and administrators contributes to ‘stagna[tion]’ and a ‘lack of development.’ Chaundra remarked, ‘The bubble is going to have to open up if we’re going to survive.’

### *LaShawn*

LaShawn experienced instances of racism and oppression specifically from colleagues and administrators. LaShawn explained that colleagues discouraged students from taking her classes,

I have difficulty getting my classes to make. And, faculty questioning my ability to teach classes. And as a result, I’ve had classes in the past canceled because it was questioned on whether I had the credentials to teach classes. And keep in mind, I am a full professor. I came here as a full professor, and I am an endowed chair, and my credentials are questioned.

LaShawn’s classes were often canceled due to low enrollment. Moreover, other faculty gave the graduate students that LaShawn mentored difficulty because she was their chair. For example, colleagues purposefully scheduled a specialization course needed by a graduate student at the same time as LaShawn’s course. This caused the graduate student to make a difficult choice between the two courses. Given the difficult position that colleagues often placed her graduate students, LaShawn did not recruit students to her HSI.

And then there’s also a problem with students who identify as Afro-Latina. Oddly enough at an HSI because again this sort of anti-Blackness. Because then even the Latino faculty don’t necessarily, or at least in our department, don’t necessarily want to work with them because whatever. And so I don’t want to—I don’t encourage students to come here to work with me. I don’t encourage them to come here and do that work because I know the difficulties that the students that have been in those situations in the past have had. We had another Black student who was in the Ph.D. program who identified as biracial. She ended up dropping out—it was just too much. I just, I can’t contribute to sort of that craziness that goes on with graduate students. We had another Black graduate student who—the other endowed chair and I are both Black—didn’t even know he was in in the department. Nor was he told anything about us despite the interest in his work. It’s just consistently trying to undermine our ability to contribute to the department and the program as well as the sort of work that we both do.

The consistent undermining by her colleagues not only impacted LaShawn but also the graduate students that she wanted to mentor.

### *Mahogany*

Overall, Mahogany felt ‘quite supported’ but primarily because of senior faculty of color who advocated for her. She experienced some problems while pursuing promotion. Some committee members said her book was not long enough; however, senior faculty of color countered those and other unfounded claims. When asked why she felt quite supported although she was challenged while pursuing promotion, Mahogany stated,

Because those people that were against me were people who had always been against me. Now the one woman of color colleague, she turned on me. She completely turned on me. And that was who I held some animosity to but the people who were against me had never been my friend. They had always been like, “We don’t know why you’re here. What you do is shit” and all those things. So, you know, I’m going to be supported by the people who support my work and support me, but I can’t change the hearts and minds of people who never wanted me there the first place.

Thus, Mahogany felt mostly positive because of the mentorship she received from senior faculty of color at her HSI. Yet Mahogany also experienced adversity from colleagues who questioned her work and her success, especially her publications and awards. Mahogany stated,

For a while I was like the most visible scholar there at Fuller, and so there were tensions around me and my success that exposed some things, but I don’t know if it was...always necessarily because I was at an HSI or these sorts of things, right? There was anti-Blackness there. There was misogyny there, but I think my high profile just made things more intense around me.

While Mahogany does not attribute those ‘tensions’ to Fuller being an HSI, there were clearly some issues (e.g., anti-Blackness and misogyny) that she identified.

### *Preetha*

During her interview, Preetha was introspective, reflecting not only on her identity but also on the identities of her students and institution. Preetha is open with students about her own ‘complicated’ identity—a melding of her Asian racial heritage, the predominantly Latinx culture surrounding her, and the transnational community in which she lives. Preetha shared,

Most of [my students] are very excited to have an [Asian professor]. (Interviewer: How does that make you feel?) Well, I’m as curious about their culture as they are about my culture. And, you know, early on in my career I realized how steeped in stereotypes we are—whether we like it or not. So confronting their stereotypes about me, made me highly conscious of the stereotypes I might hold about others so that was really good for me.

Although students embraced her, Preetha previously experienced microaggressions from colleagues. Preetha remarked,

I’m always a little taken aback as how I am supposed to represent my entire culture, or even my ethnic group, or even my racial pride—that I am a spokesperson for that...So questions are always thrown at me...for example, ‘What would an [ethnic group] woman think about this?’

Beyond contemplating how her own racial and ethnic identity affected interactions with her students and colleagues, Preetha had recently begun considering how her institution’s identity as an HSI impacted her. She expressed a desire to further explore this identity, ‘How is this particular designation [i.e., as an HSI] then affecting me?...Am I capable of meeting the needs?’ In response, Preetha began to purposefully adapt her research agenda to explore these questions.

### ***Zora***

At her HSI, Zora experienced isolation. Zora works in a field in which Black faculty are uncommon. Unfortunately, this influenced her interactions with students. Zora’s field is both quantitative and positivist but is housed in a department with a juxtaposing epistemology. Thus, students who enroll in her courses are often surprised by the content. Zora described students’

reactions to her courses by stating, ‘Students come into the course thinking it’s going to be easy due to the department it’s housed in; they are horrified at the amount of math and biology.’ In addition to students being surprised at the level of difficulty of her courses, Zora received comments on her course evaluations such as ‘This professor is scary.’

Zora also experienced a lack of institutional support. While pursuing promotion, Zora had to take a leave of absence. During two annual reviews, evaluators failed to consider how this leave of absence impacted Zora’s ability to publish. Consequently, not only was Zora’s reputation as a scholar negatively impacted but also her personal finances. Zora stated, ‘I was given only partial raises, at a time when I couldn’t even afford to live within 50 miles of my university, much less to handle [mounting] bills.’ Moreover, Zora repeatedly received misinformation that resulted in her being under the impression that she was not granted additional time to extend the promotion process. Zora also experienced difficulty procuring all of the resources needed to conduct her research.

### **The Interconnected Experiences of Black and Asian Women Faculty at HSI**

While each participant had her own unique experiences at her respective HSI, three overarching themes emerged from data analysis. These three themes revealed areas of interconnected experiences amongst our participants.

#### ***A Lack of Support***

Collectively, our participants experienced a lack of support from their colleagues and/or , department chairs. LaShawn recounted:

Somehow me speaking just intimidated people and made them feel uncomfortable... I’m not doing anything that any other faculty is doing... For one of them, this led to a huge issue in our department because she accused me and another Black woman of being racist... The department chair at the time sided with the student, and there were

faculty members in the department who were spreading rumors.

This lack of support in conjunction with such serious and unfounded accusations became looming issues for LaShawn and her Black female colleague. Aubree also did not receive much support from administrators. Aubree stated, ‘They are not supportive and instead just stay out of my way. I am glad for the fact that they just stay out of my way.’

Although in her interview Astrid stated that she interacted well with some of her colleagues, she also experienced a lack of support from them. Astrid spoke of her colleagues’ skepticism regarding the intentions of non-Latinx faculty such as herself:

I always feel like [colleagues] don't like somebody outside of the Hispanic community here to teach their classes...Like I've heard these sentences several times that “We don't need somebody from [the] outside to come and save our students. We can do it ourselves.” But I see myself [as] part of this community. So if I want to help, I don't see it as I came [to] save you. I see it as I'm here. I'm part of this community, and I want to help you and then all together help our students. So seeing it from this perspective...I don't like that they see me [as an] outsider.

Zora experienced a lack of institutional support, particularly in striving to meet one of her institution’s most important expectations: conducting research. Zora’s departmental infrastructure is not conducive to facilitating her research. Zora described this lack of support, ‘One-on-one I have a great relationship with our office staff; however, the nature of my research places a huge burden on them. One they are not equipped to handle. That’s leading to more issues affecting me professionally and personally.’ This lack of support has been a serious issue for Zora, who like others in academia, must meet research expectations to further her career.

The lack of support that our participants received from colleagues, administrators, and institutions undoubtedly impacted them by clouding interactions with students for some and the ability to engage in scholarship for others.

***A Need for Representation within the “HSI bubble” and Beyond***

We adopted the term ‘bubble,’ which Chaundra repeatedly used during her interview, to refer to the perception that HSIs tend to focus on Latinx peoples almost to the exclusion of others. Astrid, for example, spoke of the need for HSIs to employ faculty from a variety of backgrounds for the benefit of their students.

We [were] talking about hiring a new professor, and I [saw] that many people mentioned that it's better to have somebody that knows our students and somebody that can talk in the same language. I don't agree because... I feel that we should have a broader perspective... Even in our department, we had a big discussion about mentioning Hispanic students in every single sentence when we are writing our mission, vision, and everything. And I even had problems with that because I kind of feel that even if we have two students that are not Hispanic, we should not give them [the] feeling that [they] are outsiders.

Chaundra also commented on the tendency of her HSI to view non-Latinx peoples as outsiders, and she voiced her concern that too much emphasis on Latinx peoples could hurt the institution over time:

Here, it's all about “us.”... Why are you only going to other HSIs and the HSI community and recruiting the same people? There's a whole world of outside people. There is a whole world of African Americans out there... we feel that we should be a program that is focused on producing minority [professionals]. I don't think the university in terms of faculty, in terms of students—unless you're an athlete—or in terms of anything else, no, they don't [try to recruit non-Latinx individuals]. They're only still looking at “Well, we want our own and that's it.” I see they're losing out in terms of growth, in terms of development, in terms of how much better... how we could be a leader as an institution.

Relatedly, LaShawn advocated for the fair treatment of Black and AfroLatinx faculty and students at her HSI. LaShawn was instrumental in establishing a university-wide support mechanism for Black faculty and staff at Fuller.

Although neither are Latina, Mahogany and Preetha intentionally sought to include Latinx perspectives at their HSIs. Mahogany envisioned at least one Latinx leader of her HSI, either as President or Provost, if not both. Mahogany recalled her experience on a search committee for such an administrator,

I was the only one fighting for the Brown [candidate], and I'm like, "Listen, even the basic optics of this is not good for an HSI." Like, you know, because I come from an HBCU [Historically Black College and University]. And then I noticed that I was fighting harder for the Brown candidate than the Brown folk. And I was like, "Oh. Well I don't mind being the ally, but I'm not going to lead the fight for your people. So, if you're cool with a White [administrator], great, let's do it."

Meanwhile, Preetha sought to create a space in which the primarily Latinx identities of not only her students but also community were represented in both her teaching and research.

Beyond their HSIs, Astrid, Aubree, Chaundra, and Zora expressed their objectives to increase the representation of people of color in their fields. Each of these women are in quantitative- and positivist-oriented fields and envisioned themselves as helping to train up the next generation of professionals of color within their respective disciplines.

### ***A Lack of Intentionality as a Hispanic-Serving Institution***

Our participants critiqued their institutions' lack of enacting their identities as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. For example, when asked to describe her work in relation to her institution's mission and vision Zora remarked, 'If such a mission or vision exist in the context of being an HSI, then I don't know of it...I'm not saying that it doesn't exist, I just don't know of it.'

Our participants noted that HSIs differed from their sister MSIs. HBCUs and Tribal College and Universities (TCUs) tend to be heavily rooted in their racial identities since they were purposefully created to educate students of color who were denied access to PWIs. HSIs, in contrast, receive that designation after meeting an enrollment threshold of at least 25% Latinx students. Thus, many institutions unintentionally came to be HSIs. LaShawn explained,

A lot of places that are HSIs are...HSIs in name only. So Fuller is one of those places that is a true HSI in the sense that the vast majority of the students here are Hispanic, and we are in a majority Hispanic city. So there is no question that this is an HSI, right?... As opposed to someplace like UC-Santa Barbara which meets the minimum definition of an HSI but really is a school for White, rich kids, right? So, in that sense, there are places that are HSIs, that have that designation, but really, to me, aren't. It's not like an HBCU...

So I think it depends on the place. Even though it has a designation as Minority-Serving Institution, doesn't make its identity as that.

Preetha had spent her entire faculty career at an HSI. However, only recently had Preetha begun to consider how the HSI designation impacted her as a faculty member. Preetha described herself as undergoing a process of introspection and reflection,

Right now, it's what does [working at an HSI] mean to me?... I'm still in the stage of introspection. I think that is going to carry on for a while... [During this process,] I have become acutely aware of how I interact with my students. You know that certain things that I took for granted, or certain things that I thought were normal practice are things that I now kind of question.

Preetha's introspection reveals her desire to better understand what it means to be a Hispanic-*Serving* Institution and in what ways that designation should impact her teaching, research, and service. Concurrently, Preetha's introspection reveals a lack of communication from her HSI in terms of how it can intentionally serve its primarily Latinx students.

## **Discussion**

Our study suggests that Black and Asian women faculty at HSIs operate in an unsupportive microclimate. Our focus on Black and Asian women faculty reflects a Critical Race Feminist perspective as their counterstories may not reflect those of Latina faculty at HSIs.

### **An Unsupportive Microclimate**

The interconnected experiences of our participants provide insight into the generally unsupportive microclimate in which Black and Asian women faculty operate within HSIs. Perhaps the most obvious factor contributing to this unsupportive microclimate is the lack of diverse faculty and administrators at HSIs purported by Astrid, Chaundra, and Preetha. As Kim and Cooc (2020) noted, a racially and ethnically homogenous professoriate is particularly concerning. Currently, White men account for 'more than 60% of all full professors,' and



thereby ‘shape the diversity of institutions’ (Kim and Cooc 2020, 13) as administrators and hiring and/or promotion committee members.

Once hired by their HSIs, three participants faced blatant or inconspicuous attempts to undermine their research. Mahogany’s colleagues enacted epistemic exclusion (Settles et al. 2020) to delegitimize her research agenda. Colleagues discouraged graduate students—notably future faculty of color themselves—from working with LaShawn. This is an example of ‘disparities in the allocation of...graduate research support’ (Turner, González, and Wood 2008, 151). Her HSI’s infrastructure and miscommunication greatly hindered Zora’s ability to conduct her research and thus, her pursuit of promotion. This further perpetuates the notion, ‘that faculty of color are not as productive as majority, White faculty’ (Stanley 2006, 704).

#### Black and Asian women faculty at HSIs: A Critical Race Feminist perspective

In keeping with Critical Race Feminism (CRF), we focused on the ‘racialized-gendered identities’ (Hines-Datiri and Carter Andrews 2017, 4) of our participants. As Black and Asian women faculty, our participants’ hypervisibility (Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson 2019) nuanced their counterstories in ways that may differ (e.g., linguistic discrimination, anti-Blackness) from those experienced by Latina faculty at HSIs. Additionally, the varied experiences of our participants reflect the anti-essentialism inherent in CRF (Berry, 2010). Although our participants were Black and Asian, their unique counterstories are indicative of the heterogeneity of experiences within races and ethnic groups.

We sought to avoid essentialism during data analysis by questioning ourselves and each other to ensure we did not impose our own experiences on those of our participants. We enacted a critical race praxis (Berry, 2010; Wing, 2003) by sharing their stories as given to us, and we

endeavored to highlight our participants' voices on issues that mattered to them. Through member checking, we sought to ensure we presented their counterstories in ways that honored their courage and forthrightness to speak on this sensitive topic.

The implications of our study offered below are framed from a realist view of equity (Delgado and Stefancic 2016). Delgado and Stefancic (2016) wrote, '[R]ealists, then, should bear in mind that with the campus-climate debate, they should deploy arguments in light of the times and the setting against which they will be received and evaluated' (1940). Thus, we write the following implications in recognition that HSIs have much to accomplish in terms of fostering microclimates supportive of Black and Asian women faculty. Similarly, HSIs must increase faculty racial/ethnic diversity so as to reflect the rich diversity of their student bodies. This critical race praxis tenet of CRF leads us to implications that we hope will serve faculty, students, and administrators at HSIs well.

### **Implications**

Two primary implications for HSIs emerged from this study. The first is to foster a microclimate at HSIs that is supportive of Black and Asian women faculty. The second is to pop the "HSI bubble" to serve all students by through increased inclusion of diverse perspectives.

#### **Fostering a microclimate supportive of Black and Asian women faculty**

The intersectionality of their identities as women, people of color, and faculty makes it more difficult for Black and Asian women faculty to succeed in academe as evident by their stark underrepresentation amongst tenured faculty (Kim and Cooc 2020; National Center for Education Statistics 2019). Serrano (2020) argued, 'Diversity must go beyond student

demographics to include faculty, given faculty's important role in informing perceptions of campus racial microclimates' (10).

Microclimates affect 'the retention and engagement of minority and women of color faculty' (Serrano 2020, 4). Like PWIs, HSIs must diversify their faculty in terms of race/ethnicity and gender (Abrica, García-Louis, and Gallaway 2020; Contreras 2017; Cuellar 2019; Vargas, Villa-Palomino, and Davis 2020). Yet, it is not enough to simply recruit Black and Asian women faculty to HSIs. Kim and Cooc (2020) argued,

Attending to the recruitment and retention of women of color requires differential efforts through the pipeline – who enters and who stays in academe across time. Stronger recruitment and retention efforts for Black and Hispanic women and greater institutional support for [Asian American/Pacific Islander] women after they obtain tenure-track positions are needed (12-13).

HSIs must work to foster microclimates in which Black and Asian women faculty feel valued and supported to advance in academe.

As Black and Asian women faculty, our participants are uniquely positioned to benefit their HSIs by sharing not only the knowledge and skills that make them experts in their respective fields but also imparting their distinctive perspectives. Actively recruiting and intentionally fostering a campus climate in which Black and Asian women faculty feel supported can help HSIs become premier institutions where both faculty and students flourish.

The opportunity to teach, mentor, and serve students of color initially drew many of our participants to their HSIs. According to Guillaume and Apodaca (2020) this commitment to mentorship and advocacy for students of color emerges from a collectivist perspective rooted in Yosso's (2005) family capital—expressed as a commitment to community well-being. An autoethnographic study on non-Latina faculty at HSIs revealed an ethic of care (Author, 2020).

Our participants also reflected this ethic of care through their high expectations of all students at the risk, and at times reality, of lowered teaching evaluations.

Han and Leonard (2017)—Asian and Black women faculty, respectively—offered several recommendations for making higher education more inclusive such as hiring a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). The CDO must take a proactive approach to enacting institutional change related to diversity and inclusiveness. At an HSI, this would entail hiring more Asian, Black, and Latinx faculty and administrators to reflect the diverse student body. Relatedly, a CDO can ensure representation of faculty of color on tenure and promotion (Han and Leonard, 2017) and/or hiring committees. Unfortunately, several participants found their grievances ignored or the onus placed upon them to resolve them. Thus, an institutional system in which grievances made by women faculty of color and persons from minoritized backgrounds are taken seriously and collaboratively solved must be established. Mentorship from senior Black and Asian women faculty played an important role for several of our participants. Thus, HSIs can establish formal mentorship opportunities for women faculty of color.

### **Popping the Bubble: *Serving All Students through Diverse Perspectives***

Vargas, Villa-Palomino, and Davis (2020) found that nearly one-third of the abstracts of HSIs awarded Title V grants by the U.S. Department of Education indicated the purposes of their grants were related to faculty and in response to student diversity. Ideally, HSIs are institutions at which Latinx students thrive. Garcia, Núñez, and Sansone (2019) found that ‘faculty and administrators of color [at HSIs] became institutional agents who actively worked to disrupt systems of oppression that were preventing Latinx students from succeeding’ (762-763). For example, attending an HSI helped Spanish-English bilingual undergraduates to not only embrace their bilingualism but also develop a stronger sense of self (Author 2020).

Although HSIs receive that designation due to the enrollment of Latinx students, other students of color enroll. It is imperative to recognize that HSIs not only enroll the majority of Latinx students (*Excelencia in Education* 2020) but also more Black and Native American students than HBCUs and TCUs (Cuellar 2019). Thus, HSIs cannot only seek to serve their Latinx students but must also serve other students who are minoritized because of their race/ethnicity, gender, linguistic diversity, etc. We want to emphasize that we are not recommending that HSIs shift their focus away from serving their Latinx students. In fact, Garcia, Núñez, and Sansone (2019) argued that some HSIs are merely ‘Hispanic-enrolling’ (750) rather than *Hispanic-serving*. Rather, we want to encourage HSIs to intentionally reflect and serve their diverse campus communities. Yet in their systematic review of literature on HSIs, Garcia, Núñez, and Sansone (2019) found that ‘HSI leaders struggle to recruit, train, and retain part-time and full-time faculty that can effectively teach minoritized students’ (762).

This is especially troubling as faculty of color often serve as role models and/or mentors to students of color (Stanley 2006). The lack of diverse faculty at HSIs does not go unnoticed by students. King, a Black student enrolled in a HSI, asked a faculty member, ‘Why aren’t there enough African-American professors here?...You know we don’t have to teach African-American literature, we can teach Shakespeare’ (Serrano 2020, 10). Vargas, Villa-Palomino, and Davis (2020) argued ‘the presence of faculty of color on campus is meaningful to students...they also send a message that people of color belong in academic spaces’ (50). The inclusion of more Black and Asian women faculty at HSIs will thereby convey that not only white and Latinx perspectives are valued.

No matter the institutional context, a racially and ethnically diverse faculty communicates to students that an inclusive campus community is a priority. As Moreno et al. (2006) stated, ‘to

truly achieve excellence in [education, research, service, and governance], [campus leaders] must tap the kind of intellectual power and innovation that comes from a professoriate that is racially and ethnically diverse' (2). We concur with Banda, Flowers, and Robinson (2017) who argued that although HSIs should be lauded for their commitment to hiring Latinx faculty, 'there is a need to hire more African-American/black, Asian/Pacific Islander and Indian/Alaskan Native faculty. HSIs, in other words, must consciously ensure that equitable opportunity exists for *all* scholars of color... [to enact] true faculty diversity' (259). Thus, in designing a conceptual framework to enact the *Hispanic-Serving* identity of HSIs, Garcia, Núñez, and Sansone (2019) identified related elements such as a diverse faculty community.

Thus, HSIs would do well to actively recruit Black and Asian women faculty. Doing so can enhance their students' educational experiences. The recruitment of Black and Asian women faculty members is and will be beneficial to students at HSIs by providing them with diverse perspectives that will enrich their learning. As previously mentioned, HSIs must also work to retain Black and Asian women faculty members and can do so by fostering a supportive microclimate.

### **Conclusion**

This study suggests the experiences of Black and Asian women faculty at HSIs differ in many ways. Yet three primary themes emerged from our study, including a lack of support, a need for representation within the 'HSI bubble,' and a lack of intentionality as a *Hispanic-Serving* Institution. The first two themes coupled together suggest that Black and Asian women faculty employed by HSIs operate within an unsupportive microclimate. This microclimate not only impacts these faculty members but also arguably students across HSIs. In response, we

argue that HSIs must pop the 'HSI bubble' and begin to foster microclimates that are more inclusive of diverse perspectives and cultures.

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