Moving from Racist to Antiracist Practices: Using Lewin’s Field Theory to Examine Career Help-Seeking Behaviors and Intentions of Black First-Generation Students Attending Predominantly White Institutions

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Moving from Racist to Antiracist Practices: Using Lewin’s Field Theory to Examine Career Help-Seeking Behaviors and Intentions of Black First-Generation Students Attending Predominantly White Institutions

ABSTRACT

This study examined person and environment contextual factors associated with career decision-making difficulties among Black first-generation students (FGSs) attending predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Using Lewin’s field theory, we investigated the predictive value of person and environment factors on help-seeking behaviors for 63 Black FGS attending PWIs. We used a non-experimental correlational research design, along with hierarchical regression analysis, to investigate the predictability of contextual factors on previous career services use and intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. Change/loss in advisor and lack of information were associated with previous career services use, whereas intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers was predicted by age, gender, interaction self-efficacy, and academic competitiveness within their program. Findings of this study can be used to develop and implement antiracist college counseling and career advising services. We explore implications for practice, include suggestions for policy modifications, discuss the limitations of our study, and finally, provide recommendations for future research.

Keywords: first-generation, help-seeking behaviors, racist career barriers, minoritized persons, white supremacy, antiracist policies

Despite decades of investments in government programs, faculty research, and financial scholarships focused on recruiting, retaining, and matriculating underrepresented and first-generation students (FGSs) to reduce academic and career development inequities, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities have increased (Allen, 2018; Kane et al., 2021; Maietta, 2016). Recent findings indicate that Black students who attended predominantly white institutions (PWIs) fared worse than their non-Black peers at PWIs as well as their Black peers at non-PWIs (Gallup & 2U, 2021; McGee et al., 2019; Strayhorn, 2017). Black FGSs have endured myriad obstacles in higher education (Hines et al., 2019), and at PWIs, they are compounded by racism, oppression, and white supremacy (Bernard et al., 2020). Moreover, for-profit colleges have capitalized on the inequality, predatorily targeting marginalized students (Cottom, 2017), and recently, have even formed partnerships with PWIs (Carey, 2020). As a result, costs have
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skyrocketed; from 2008 to 2018, tuition at public colleges jumped up 37% (Hess, 2019), whereas wages barely increased 5% during the same time (Economic Policy Institute, 2019).

Although Black FGSs could benefit from academic advising, college counseling, and career services (Parks-Yancy, 2012), they have been less likely to utilize these resources (Nickerson et al., 1994; Winograd & Rust, 2014). Perhaps because when some Black FGSs have sought help, they encountered academic advisors who dismissed or refused to understand their experiences at PWIs, leaving their challenges not only unaddressed, but exacerbated (Lee, 2018). bell hooks (1996) advocated for “a paradigm, a practical model for social change that includes an understanding of ways to transform consciousness that are linked to efforts to transform structures” (p. 193). In turn, antiracist praxis was recommended to combat disparities created from systemic racism pervasive in K-12 and higher education (Batur-VanderLippe, 1999; Utt & Tochluk, 2020). As Kendi (2019) explained, “[o]ne either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is no in-between safe space of ‘not racist.’ The claim of ‘not racist’ neutrality is a mask for racism” (p. 9). Specific practices must be identified, implemented, and evaluated to successfully move from racist to antiracist academic advising, college counseling, and career services. A preliminary study was conducted to examine barriers to career development of Black FGSs, Lewin’s (1936) field theory (of behavior) was used to test predictors of help-seeking. Following is an overview of variables used in the study (factors identified in the literature to influence career development of Black FGSs), a description of Lewin’s field theory (how it will be applied), and the research questions (RQs).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

PWIs of higher education continue to target, recruit, and enroll Black FGSs, claiming to value diversity in their classrooms, marketing their academic programs as keys to financial and vocational equity, and promoting their campuses and surrounding communities as inclusive learning and social settings. Yet, Black students have reported experiencing racist stereotypes on campus (Harper, 2006) and being subjected to “deeply entrenched, codified sociospatial racial norms that constrain their behavior, movement, and routines in ways that encumber them from functioning as valued members of classrooms, dorms, social activities, and academic departments” (Harwood et al., 2018, p. 1256). The appropriation of inclusive language in PWIs’ mission statements and intentional visual presentation of Black students and faculty on campus, while simultaneously ignoring the cultural trauma perpetuated through racial bias, stereotyping, and discrimination (Liu et al., 2019) serves to “maintain and strengthen the status quo that marginalizes diversity” (Brayboy, 2003, p. 86). Specifically, the white supremacist ideology,
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biased policies, and “traditional” racist practices at PWIs (Mehler, 1999) impede Black FGSs’ ability to access, navigate, and succeed in higher education (Liu, 2017; Worthington et al., 2008).

Postsecondary schools broadly comprise two types: minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and PWIs. MSI status is determined by established federal guidelines, based on either stated mission or minimum student enrollment by socioeconomic status (SES; e.g., low-income) and racial/ethnic group membership (e.g., Black); however, no official designation exists for PWIs. Yet scholars have noted that contrary to MSIs, which were established to mitigate longstanding educational inequities hindering minoritized students, PWIs were founded on principles of racism, established to operate in cultures of whiteness, and perpetuate systemic racism (Hughes, 2014). Unsurprisingly, the *Ivory Tower* (or PWI) is often described as a lonely and unwelcoming place by faculty, staff, and students of color, including Black FGSs (Ford et al., 2016).

**Effects of PWIs on Black First-Generation Students (FGSs)**

Black FGSs attend PWIs in pursuit of higher education; yet matriculation rates have steadily decreased, while attrition rates continue to increase (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2021). Specifically, though PWIs accounted for nearly nine out of 10 (87.1%) Black undergraduates, they only conferred about three-fourths (78.5%) of all bachelor’s degrees among Blacks (McClain & Perry, 2017). Many Black students enter college with “racial battle fatigue” (Smith, 2004) due to the cumulative impact of racial microaggressions endured during K-12 education (Henfield, 2011). Unfortunately, Black students who manage to escape this racial trauma prior to entering the PWI, are unlikely to leave unscathed (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007) because PWIs cultivate hostile climates which serve as catalysts of racial terror, vital for producing racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2011). At one PWI, Black students described classroom experiences of racial microaggressions from faculty and peers, including being subjected to racial stereotype comments, having their contributions minimized, being made to feel inferior for speaking, and not being taken seriously (Harwood et al., 2015). Thus, by ignoring or minimizing racial microaggressions, PWIs successfully perpetuate racism through educational practice, and protect white supremacy, and their valued status in society.

**Racial Microaggressions.** Racial microaggressions include three types of transgressions: 1) *microassaults* (e.g., intentional racial slurs), 2) *microinsults* (e.g., demeaning racialized comments), and 3) *microinvalidations* (e.g., negating the racism experienced by people of color; Sue et al., 2007), and can differ by gender. For example, Black males experienced more stereotyping and racial profiling from campus security and local police (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007),
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whereas Black women were compelled to model stereotypical positive behaviors to address racial microaggressions (Corbin et al., 2018). Racial microaggressions caused isolation, marginalization, and alienation (Dortch & Patel, 2017). Specifically, Black FGSs at one PWI reported that difficult experiences related to their racial identity and first-generation status led to feelings of “otherness” (Havlik et al., 2020). These covert and overt racial microaggressions have been found to negatively impact self-esteem (Nadal et al., 2014), cause Black college students to question their abilities due to experiences of racial bias, with those who attended PWIs with racially hostile academic spaces being more likely to develop low self-efficacy (McGee, 2016).

**Barriers.** Black FGSs have reported challenges transitioning to PWIs, like “culture shock in a sea of whiteness,” as barriers to achieving their goals (McCoy, 2014). Examining the effects of demographic factors on graduation rates of students enrolled at 24 PWIs, Keels (2013) found gender gaps, which differed by race and SES. Namely, Black males reported being pressured to mature faster than their White peers, such as focusing on “true success” and avoiding “the frat life” (Wilkins, 2014, p. 182). Ultimately, experiencing racist attacks at PWIs have left Black FGSs feeling lost, angry, and defeated (Ford et al., 2016). Moreover, minoritized groups, such as Black FGSs, are disproportionately subjected to gender-, racial-, and class-based discrimination, resulting in distress (Thoits, 2010) and negatively affecting their academic performance and well-being (Ackerman-Barger et al., 2020). Furthermore, lack of family support to attend college (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014), and discouragement from coworkers and peers to pursue graduate studies (Schwartz et al., 2003), create additional barriers for Black FGSs. In addition, programs that fail to establish a sense of community cause their students to isolate and receive less support from one another, and create greater competition among peers (Smith et al., 2006). Thus, Black FGSs must beat numerous odds to achieve a postsecondary degree while simultaneously battling experiences of racial microaggressions and systemic racism at PWIs (Harper, 2012; Mills, 2015).

**Career Development.** Black FGSs face various barriers to career development, including lack of professional social networks (Tate et al., 2015), career-enhancing information (Frett, 2018), and mentoring (Patton & Harper, 2003; Vickers, 2014). For example, among Black FGSs, undergraduates attending PWIs developed imposter syndrome and self-sabotaged career plans (Harris, 2018), yet when seeking better financial options, graduates have chosen PWIs (over non-PWIs) due to their perceived superior instructional quality (Schwartz et al., 2003). Inequitable policies (e.g., Black student organizations stifled by white property rights; Jones, 2020) and oppressive practices (e.g., Black faculty jeopardize tenure/promotion with activism; Jones & Squire, 2018) at PWIs create racist barriers for Black FGSs which impede
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Vocational decisions. Personal (e.g., low self-efficacy) and environmental (e.g., white supremacist ideology) barriers restrict career development and employment outcomes for those with minoritized racial identities (Reid, 2013). For example, low self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Olson, 2014) were found to limit career choices and constrain career plans of Black FGSs (Parks-Yancy, 2012).

**Academic Supports and Career Services.** University services can help mitigate barriers encountered by Black FGSs trying to realize their career goals. These supports are particularly relevant for Black FGSs attending PWIs, who reported more depression, anxiety, and stress than their peers at MSIs (Williams, 2014). Although informal supports (e.g., peers in Black student organizations) can be assets for Black FGSs at PWIs, they can also be liabilities during the career development process (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Conversely, professional supports in higher education (e.g., career services) are there to ensure student success (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014).


**College Counseling and Career Services.** While college counseling and career services could mitigate the barriers associated with attending PWIs, Black FGSs face systemic challenges simply to gain access. Unlike primary (i.e., White) programs and professional offices which are placed for optimal visibility, multicultural offices are obscured and located apart (e.g., in back hallways), diversity programs are underfunded and under-resourced, and minoritized students are subjected to re-traumatization with “business as usual” racist practices at PWIs (Redd, 2018). Conversely, underrepresented, low-income, and FGSs who received support from program staff and engaged in career-related activities through a college transition program, experienced gains in career self-efficacy (Kezar et al., 2020). Similarly, career counseling was found to improve academic and career self-efficacy among high school students (Stipanovic et al., 2017).
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Help-Seeking among Black FGSs
Although Black FGSs experiencing career development barriers could benefit from professional supports, such as career counseling (e.g., Byars-Winston, 2010), decades of research findings show Black Americans are reluctant to seek help for emotional and psychological issues (Neighbors, 1988; Taylor & Kuo, 2019), particularly from White counselors (Nickerson et al., 1994), and at PWIs (Bonner, 1997). In fact, help-seeking among Black college students was found to decrease as experiences of racial microaggressions in counseling increased (Crawford, 2011). While counselors are trained to be open-minded and non-judgmental, implicit biases (e.g., attitudes one is not aware of, but which can influence judgments) remain common, have led to racial microaggressions (e.g., conveying facial surprise when first meeting a Black client), and left clients feeling “distrustful, angered, and resentful” (Sue et al., 2008, p. 337). According to a recent study, Black FGSs only sought help when ultimately necessary (Lampley, 2020).

Lewin’s Field Theory
Nearly a century ago, Kurt Lewin (1936) developed an equation to explain behavior \( B \) in any given situation \( S \), where \( B \) is a function \( f \) of \( S \): \( B = f(S) \) and established his field theory. According to Lewin, behavior could only be understood “if one includes in the representation the whole psychological situation” (p. 12). Each psychological situation distinguishes the person \( P \) from his or her environment \( E \) and is dependent “upon the state of the person and at the same time on the environment” (Lewin, 1936, p. 12). Moreover, he explained that behavior was also a result of the interface with environmental factors such as societal attitudes, actions, and/or systems (Lewin, 1935). Lewin demonstrated how minoritized social groups could be studied, understood, and treated as a group (e.g., Black FGSs), given that often problems or issues are passed on from the group to an individual by mere group identity or membership (Lewin, 1935). Each individual event is therefore represented as \( B = f(P, E) \).

Purpose of the Present Study
A recent study on access to the United States’ highest quality colleges revealed little has changed since 2000, with most remaining inaccessible to Black students (The Education Trust, 2020). The steady decline in retention of Black FGSs has been associated with experiences of racial microaggressions at PWIs (Lewis et al., 2019; Mills, 2020), which in turn were found to increase academic-related stress, reduce academic self-efficacy, and negatively affect career development (Nadal et al., 2014). College counseling or career services could mitigate barriers at PWIs, but Black FGSs are least likely to seek professional help, given that current practices were founded on racism and perpetuate white supremacy ideologies. Antiracist college counseling and career services include the eradication of racist ideological policies (e.g.,
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#AllLivesMatter in response to #BlackLivesMatter masked in colorblindness; Jones, 2017) and practices (e.g., discourse of administrators downplays racism at their PWI; Jones, 2019). Counselors, educators, administrators, and policy makers must be equipped with the knowledge and resources to help abolish the racist career barriers plaguing Black FGSs. Antiracist approaches that facilitate career development at PWIs are needed to achieve equitable outcomes for Black FGSs. The urgency to promote dialogue that supports making necessary societal changes to eradicate racist practices, dismantle lingering oppressive policies, and create welcoming institutional climates is evident.

This preliminary study examined career development barriers of Black FGSs at PWIs. Using Lewin’s field theory, we identified significant predictors of help-seeking. Based on our findings, we provided implications for practice (equitable services to be provided at PWIs), suggestions for policy modifications (moving from racist to antiracist), and recommendations for future research directions. The six (6) research questions (RQs) we asked were:

RQ1. What factors are barriers to career development for Black FGSs at PWIs?

RQ2. Which contextual (P, E) factors are associated with previous career services use?

RQ3. Does Lewin’s field theory (of behavior) predict previous career services use?

RQ4. What factors are related to racist career barriers for Black FGSs at PWIs?

RQ5. Which contextual (P, E) factors are associated with intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers?

RQ6. Does Lewin’s field theory predict intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers?

Methods

Participants and Procedures
All participants who self-identified as Black FGSs (n=63) were extracted from a larger study sample (N=168) of racial/ethnic minoritized FGSs who were attending PWIs. Purposive sampling was used to recruit potential participants from local TRiO programs at PWIs. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to recruitment and data collection.

Measures
Various validated instruments and a sociodemographic questionnaire were used to measure predictors of help-seeking using Lewin’s (1936) field theory, which posits that Behavior (B) is a function (f) of the Person (P) and his or her Environment (E): B = f (P, E). These constructs, as hypothesized for this
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study, and an overview of the measures used are discussed below. However, in-depth details of these measures are described elsewhere (see Childs, 2018).

Measures Used to Examine Career Development and Previous Career Services Use

Help-Seeking Behavior. To assess past help-seeking behavior (previous career services use), students were asked 2 specific questions, “Have you received Career Services for personal barriers (Mentioned previously) anytime as a student?” and “Have you received University career services for Difficult Career Decisions anytime as a student?” and responded accordingly (1 = Yes or 0 = No). Responses were summed for previous career services use score (range: 0–2).

Environment Factors. The sociodemographic questionnaire collected information on environmental contextual factors, including: participation in programs (TRiO enrollment), social supports (lack of friend/mentor support, lack of family assistance or support), and campus environment (advisor change/loss, racial microaggressions). Responses for each of the five items were rated on either a dichotomous (1 = Yes, 0 = No) or Likert-type (0 = No, 2 = Yes) scale.

Person Factors. The Academic Stress (AS; Zajacova et al., 2005) subscales were used to measure perceived stress (from 0 = not at all stressful to 10 = extremely stressful) in completing various school-related tasks. Internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) for the 4 AS subscales were reported to be .83 (Interaction at School), .86 (Performance out of Class), .83 (Performance in Class), and .72 (Managing Work, Family, and School). In the current study, Cronbach’s alphas for the AS subscales were computed to be .84 (Interaction at School), .83 (Performance out of Class), .80 (Performance in Class), and .61 (Managing Work, Family, and School). The Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ; Gati & Saka, 2001) was used to measure specific (from 1 = does not describe me to 9 = describes me well) and overall (from 1 = not severe at all to 9 = very severe) career-related difficulties. Internal reliability for the 3 CDDQ subscales were reported to be .60 (Lack of Readiness), .93 (Lack of Information), and .83 (Inconsistent Information). Cronbach’s alphas for the CDDQ subscales were computed to be .50 (Lack of Readiness), .93 (Lack of Information), and .89 (Inconsistent Information) in this study.

Measures Used to Examine Intention to Seek Counseling for Racist Career Barriers Help-Seeking Behavior

To determine future help-seeking behavior (intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers), student responses to, “Would you attend University Career Services for Career Decisions impacted by Racial Microaggression (racial insult or slur) experienced?” were used. Responses were scored on a Likert-type scale
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from 0 (No) to 2 (Yes).

**Environment Factors.** Information extracted from the sociodemographic questionnaire to reflect environmental contextual factors included: program culture (TRiO helpfulness, academic competitiveness in their program) and exposure to white supremacist institutional oppressive practices (racism or perceived discrimination at institution by faculty or staff, racism or perceived discrimination at institution by peers, experienced racial microaggressions while at PWI, experienced career difficulties due to microaggressions). Responses for each of the 6 items were rated on either a dichotomous (1 = Yes, 0 = No) or Likert-type (0 = No, 2 = Yes) scale.

**Person Factors.** The sociodemographic questionnaire included age and gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female). The Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE; Zajacova et al., 2005) subscales were used to measure perceived ability (from 0 = not at all confident to 10 = extremely confident) in completing academic tasks. Internal reliability coefficient estimates were reported as satisfactory for Interaction at School (.87), Performance Out of Class (.90), Performance in Class (.87), and Managing Work, Family, and School (.77). In the current study, Cronbach’s alphas for the ASE subscales were computed to be. 87 (Interaction at School), .87 (Performance Out of Class), .91 (Performance in Class), and .74 (Managing Work, Family, and School).

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 25). G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) was used to conduct an *a priori* power analysis for the total R2 value for multiple regression analyses with 12 predictor variables, power = .80, alpha = .05, and yielded minimum samples of 61 for a large effect size ($f^2 = .35$; Cohen, 1988). Pearson product-moment correlations and Spearman rank-order correlations were computed for all predictor and outcome variables. Correlations were assessed to determine factors associated with career development and variables used to examine previous career services use. Hierarchical regression analysis (HRA) was conducted with previous career services use ($B$) as the dependent variable and two sets of predictors entered in sequential steps: (1) five *E factors* (TRiO enrollment, lack of friend/mentor support, change/loss in advisor, lack of family support, and racial microaggressions) and (2) seven *P factors* (4 types of academic stress and 3 types of career decision-making difficulties). HRA is particularly useful when more than one predictor variable is used to measure a construct (Hoyt et al., 2006), as the change in R2 ($\Delta R^2$) shows the combined contribution (of the variable set) in predicting (variance) the criterion, while $sr^2$ shows the unique contribution (of each variable) of variance in predicting the criterion. Additional correlations were assessed to determine factors associated with racist career barriers and variables used to examine intention to
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seek counseling for racist career barriers.

Another HRA model was conducted with intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers \((B)\) as the dependent variable and two predictor sets entered sequentially: (1) six \(E\) factors (TRiO helpfulness, academic competitiveness in program, racism/discrimination from faculty/staff, racism/discrimination from peers, racial microaggressions experienced at PWI, career difficulties due to microaggressions) and (2) six \(P\) factors (age, gender, and 4 types of academic self-efficacy).

Results

Career Development and Previous Career Services Use

Pearson product-moment correlations and Spearman rank-order correlations for all variables used to examine factors associated with career development and to predict previous career services use are presented in Table 1 on page 41. Significant correlations for factors associated with career development and between predictors and previous career services use are provided.

RQ1 – Career Barriers. Career decision-making difficulty-lack of readiness was significantly associated with stress-interaction at school \((r = .30, p < .05)\) and stress-performance in class \((r = .29, p \leq .05)\); career decision-making difficulty-lack of information was significantly correlated to stress-interaction at school \((r = .31, p \leq .05)\); and career decision-making difficulty-inconsistent information was significantly associated with stress-interaction at school \((r = .26, p \leq .05)\), stress-performance out of class \((r = .28, p \leq .05)\), stress-managing work, family, and school \((r = .26, p \leq .05)\), and lack of friend/mentor support \((r = .32, p \leq .05)\).

RQ2 – P & E Career Services Factors.

Significant correlations between predictors and help-seeking were found for previous career services use and career decision-making difficulty-lack of information \((r = .34, p \leq .01)\), TRiO enrollment \((r = .27, p \leq .05)\), and change/loss in advisor \((r = –.33, p \leq .01)\). Black FGSs who reported greater career decision-making difficulty due to lack of information and were enrolled in TRiO were more likely to report previous career services use, while change/loss in advisor reported less previous career services use.

RQ3 – Predictors of Previous Career Services Use.

HRA results, including \(\Delta R^2\), unstandardized regression coefficients \((B)\), standard errors \((SE B)\), and standardized coefficients \((\beta)\) for the predictor variables are presented in Table 2. First, environment factors (TRiO enrollment=enrolled, lack of friend/mentor support, change/loss in advisor, lack of family support, and racial microaggressions) were entered. This variable set explained 24\% of the variance in previous career services use, \(R^2 = .235, F(5, 57) = 3.500, p = .008\). Change/loss in advisor was negatively associated with previous career services use, \(\beta = –.293, t(62) = –2.22, p = .030\), whereas lack of family support was positively
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**Table 1.**


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<td>-.04</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP5</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean**

|       | 0.57 | 4.46 | 6.14 | 7.88 | 5.98 | 4.53 | 3.92 | 3.16 |

**SD**

|       | 0.82 | 2.38 | 1.94 | 2.22 | 2.13 | 1.02 | 1.87 | 1.79 |

**Note.** *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001; O= Outcome; O1= previous career services use; P= Predictor (Pearson product-moment correlation); P1= stress-interaction at school; P2= stress-performance out of class; P3= stress-performance in class; P4= stress-managing work, family, & school; P5= career decision-making difficulty-lack of readiness; P6= career decision-making difficulty-lack of information; P7= career decision-making difficulty-inconsistent information; cP= categorical Predictor (Spearman rank-order correlation); cP1= TRiO enrollment (enrolled); cP2= lack of friend/mentor support; cP3= change/loss in advisor; cP4= lack of family support; cP5= racial microaggressions.
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associated with previous career services use, $\beta = .254, t(62) = 2.06, p = .044$. Person factors (4 types of academic stress and 3 types of career decision-making difficulties) were entered next. This set of predictor variables explained 18% more variance beyond the variables from the previous step, $R^2 = .418, \Delta R^2 = .183, F(7, 50) = 2.997, p = .045$. Career decision-making difficulty-lack of information was positively associated with previous career services use, $\beta = .351, t(62) = 2.030, p = .048$. The final regression model accounted for 42% (a large effect size; Cohen, 1988) of the variance in previous career services use. When controlling for all factors, change/loss in advisor and career decision-making difficulty due to lack of information significantly predicted previous career services use.

Intention to Seek Counseling for Racist Career Barriers

A correlation matrix (Pearson product-moment correlations and Spearman rank-order correlations) for all variables used to examine factors associated with racist career barriers (and to predict intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers) is presented in Table 3. Results of significant correlations for factors associated with racist career barriers and between predictors and intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers are provided.

RQ4 – Racist Career Barriers. Significant factors associated with racist career barriers were found among correlations between career difficulties due to racial microaggressions with racism/discrimination from faculty/staff ($r = .31, p \leq .05$) and with racial microaggressions at PWI ($r = .40, p < .001$).

RQ5 – P & E Racist Career Barriers.
Significant correlations between predictors and help-seeking were found for intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers and self-efficacy-interaction at school ($r = .41, p \leq .001$) and gender (i.e., female, $r = .27, p \leq .05$). Black FGSs who reported greater self-efficacy related to interaction at school and females were more likely to affirm their intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers.

RQ6 – Predictors of Intention to Seek Counseling for Racist Career Barriers. HRA results, including $\Delta R^2$, unstandardized regression coefficients (B), standard errors (SE B), and standardized coefficients ($\beta$) for the predictor variables are presented in Table 4. Environment factors (TRiO helpfulness=helpful, academic competitiveness in program, racism/discrimination from faculty/staff, racism/discrimination from peers, microaggressions experienced at PWI, and career difficulties due to microaggressions) were entered. This variable set explained 20% of the variance in intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers, $R^2 = .197, F(6, 56) = 2.293, p = .048$. Microaggressions experienced at PWI was negatively associated with intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers, $\beta = -.324, t(62) = -2.436, p = .018$. Next, person factors (age, gender=female, and 4 types of academic
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Table 2.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Model 1: Prediction of Help-Seeking Behavior—Previous Career Services Use (N = 63)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>At Entry into Model</th>
<th>In the Final Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1 (Environment Factors)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIo Enrollment (Enrolled)</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.235**</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Friend/Mentor Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change/Loss in Advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.57</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Family Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Microaggressions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2 (Person Factors)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress-Interaction at School</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.183**</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress-Performance Out of Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; -0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress-Performance In Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress-Managing Work, Family, &amp; School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Difficulty-Lack of Readiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Difficulty-Lack of Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Difficulty-Inconsistent Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; TRiO = Federal TRiO Programs.

self-efficacy) were entered. This set explained 31% more variance beyond the variables from the previous step, $R^2 = .509$, $\Delta R^2 = .312$, $F(6, 50) = 4.326, p < .001$. Gender (being female) was negatively associated with intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers, $\beta = -0.336$, $t(62) = -3.051, p = .004$, whereas age, $\beta = 0.338$, $t(62) = 3.026, p = .004$, and self-efficacy-interaction at school, $\beta = 0.376$, $t(62) = 3.433, p = .001$, were positively associated with intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. The final regression model accounted for 51% (a large effect size; Cohen, 1988) of the variance in intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. Controlling all factors, academic competitiveness in program, age, gender, and self-efficacy related to interaction at school were significant predictors of intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers (see Table 4).

**Discussion**

This preliminary study examined barriers to career development of Black FGSs at PWIs. In addition, personal and environmental contextual factors hypothesized as predictors of help-seeking behaviors and intentions
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Table 3.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>O1</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>cP1</th>
<th>cP2</th>
<th>cP3</th>
<th>cP4</th>
<th>cP5</th>
<th>cP6</th>
<th>cP7</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.80***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.71***</td>
<td>.65***</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP1</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP2</td>
<td>.27*</td>
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<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP3</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP4</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP5</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP6</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>-.26*</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.50***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP7</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cP8</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.40***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean | 0.48 | 6.40 | 5.55 | 4.52 | 5.47 | 22.40 |       |       |         |       |       |       |
SD   | 0.50 | 2.09 | 2.06 | 2.64 | 2.27 | 5.47 |       |       |         |       |       |       |

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001; O= Outcome; O1= intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers; P= Predictor (Pearson product-moment correlations); P1= self-efficacy-interaction at school; P2= self-efficacy-performance out of class; P3= self-efficacy-performance in class; P4= self-efficacy-managing work, family, & school; cP= categorical Predictor (Spearman rank-order correlations); cP1= age; cP2= gender (female); cP3= TRiO helpfulness (helpful); cP4= academic competitiveness in program; cP5= racism/discrimination from faculty/staff; cP6= racism/discrimination from peers; cP7= racial microaggressions at PWI; cP8= career difficulties due to racial microaggressions.


Among Black FGSs attending PWIs were explored.

Research Questions (RQs), Findings, and Implications for Practice

RQ1 – Career Barriers. Career development barriers (decision-making difficulties) were associated with lack of friend/mentor support, and stress regarding interaction at school, performance in and out of class, and managing life roles. Our findings reflect previous barriers identified as common for FGSs, including a high desire to connect with faculty, low participation in extracurricular activities, feeling uncomfortable in college environments, being underprepared academically, and lacking time management...
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Table 4.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Model 2: Prediction of Intention to Seek Counseling for Racist Career Barriers (N = 63)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( R^2 )</th>
<th>( \Delta R^2 )</th>
<th>At Entry into Model</th>
<th>In the Final Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1 (Environment Factors)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRiO Helpfulness (Helpful)</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>.197*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Competitiveness in Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism/Discrimination from Faculty/Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism/Discrimination from Peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Microaggressions at PWI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Difficulties due to Microaggressions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2 (Person Factors)</strong></td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.312***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy-Interaction at School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy -Performance Out of Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy -Performance In Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy -Managing Work, Family, &amp; School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. * \( p \leq .05; ** p \leq .01; *** p \leq .001; TRiO = Federal TRiO Programs.*

We found to benefit from teacher/counselor structured academic support and guidance (Roderick et al., 2008), and could benefit from similar transitional supports when first entering college. Moreover, school counselors were found to be particularly useful sources of college and career information for FGSs (Owen et al., 2020); therefore, college recruiters and career counselors should establish working relationships with school counselors to facilitate transition and utilize tools, such as career mapping to assist with career decision-making (Rafes et al., 2014).

RQ2 – P & E Career Services Factors. Previous career services use by Black FGSs at PWIs was positively correlated to TRiO enrollment and negatively associated with change/loss in advisor. The benefits of participation in TRiO programs for Black FGSs are evident (e.g., Vaughan et al., 2020). Black FGSs indicated receiving social support from professors as being important and helping to buffer academic stress (Harrington, 2011).
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Meanwhile, same-race connections were found to be important for graduate advising and mentoring (Barker, 2011). Thus, active recruitment, intentional hiring, and continued development of Black faculty, staff, and counselors across academic departments, disciplines, and student support services, including TRiO programs at PWIs is needed (Chang et al., 2020; Harris, 2018; Stewart, 2019).

RQ3 – Predictors of Previous Career Services Use. Results from the HRA indicate that previous career services use can be predicted from environment and person factors. The overall model allows for a prediction of 42% of the variance in previous career services use among Black FGSs at PWIs. Notably, environment factors contributed the most variance (24%) in previous career services use, and in the final model, change/loss in advisor remained the most significant individual predictor of previous career services use. Contrary to our expectation, change/loss in advisor was negatively associated with previous career services use. Previous research shows that Black FGSs who have positive relationships with their advisors are more engaged in peripheral college activities (Seifert et al., 2006). Moreover, Black FGSs who experienced change/loss in advisor were less likely to use support services on campus that are overwhelmingly provided by White faculty members (Stanley, 2020). We also found that Black FGSs who had career decision-making difficulties due to lack of information were more likely to have used career services. This aligns with recent findings that Black FGSs at PWIs underutilized social supports on campus for fear of being judged by others, losing face, or making matters worse (Chang et al., 2020), and in turn, engaged in help-seeking behaviors only when needed, and often only as a last resort (Lampley, 2020).

In the final HRA model, lack of family support was no longer a significant predictor of previous career services use, even though it was statistically significant when entered in the model. This result signifies the possible mediating effect of career decision-making difficulty due to lack of information on the relationship between lack of family support and career services use. Given the overwhelming research indicating that family are often unable to assist FGSs with career decisions, PWIs should proactively support Black students’ development (Cohen, 2021).

RQ4 – Racist Career Barriers. Career difficulties due to microaggressions in our study, was positively related to experiencing racial microaggressions at PWI and racism/discrimination from faculty/staff. Racial microaggressions cause race-related stress, create cultural mistrust, and impede help-seeking among Black students (Cusick Brix, 2018). Moreover, as White college students have been found to see little evidence of racism, dismiss the power of systemic racism, and placate Whites as the actual victims due to “reverse racism” (Cabrera, 2014), Black undergraduates considering graduate studies
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should be advised to seek out programs that have Black faculty and currently enrolled Black students and be encouraged to ask candid questions about the experiences of Black people on campus and in the surrounding communities (Stanley, 2020). When working with Black FGSs, faculty and advisors should acknowledge intersectional identities and establish trust before providing constructive feedback to reduce perceptions the criticism is based on their minoritized identity (Auguste et al., 2018). White administrators, faculty, and staff must work toward decentering Whiteness and centering the experiences of Black people, including Black faculty, counselors, and FGSs, who continue to be silenced and are expected to accept being silenced (Spickard et al., 2017) to establish a supportive campus environment within the PWI (Warren, 2017). To begin, Black faculty and staff, “must be allowed to act in untempered ways as their livelihoods quite literally depend on changing a broader racist system” (Jones & Squire, 2018, p. 37). Meanwhile, White faculty and staff serving when on committees and attending department meetings could begin by asking themselves, “‘who does not have a seat at this table?’ and ‘what are we going to do about it?’” (West, 2020, p. 71).

RQ5 – P & E Racist Career Barriers. Black FGSs who were female and had greater self-efficacy pertaining to interaction at school, in our study, were more likely to report intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. In prior studies, Black females were more likely to consider utilizing career counseling, personal counseling, and time management training (Sheu & Sedlacek, 2004). To increase self-efficacy with interaction at school for Black FGSs, senior Black FG undergraduate and graduate students should receive training to help mentor incoming and junior students and help connect them to antiracist campus resources (Harris, 2018).

RQ6 – Predictors of Intention to Seek Counseling for Racist Career Barriers. HRA results from the second model indicate that intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers can be predicted from environment and person factors. The overall model allows for a prediction of 51% of the variance in intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers among Black FGSs at PWIs. Notably, the second step in the HRA, person factors, contributed the most variance (31%) in intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers, and in the full model, three variables from this set (i.e., age, gender, and self-efficacy-interaction at school) were the most significant independent predictors of intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. Our data reveals that Black FGSs at PWIs who reported competitiveness within their academic programs were less likely to report intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. As reflected in previous findings, academic competitiveness is negatively associated with campus involvement among Black FGSs at PWIs (Johnson, 2013). Thus, faculty should work to
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improve feelings of cohesion rather than competition within their programs (Callan, 2018; Ota, 2016).

We found gender was significant in predicting intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. Along with prior research on Black FGSs, females were less inclined to seek counseling services (Gadson, 2018), whereas males were more likely to utilize college supports (Harris, 2018). Finally in our study, Black FGSs who were older and reported higher interaction self-efficacy were more likely to indicate intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers at PWIs. Recent studies of Black FGSs found that being older (Auguste et al., 2018) and having greater self-efficacy (Stanley, 2020) were associated with greater likelihood of help-seeking. In the final HRA model, experiences of microaggressions were no longer significant in predicting intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers, even though it was statistically significant when entered in the model. This result signifies the possible mediating effects of age, gender, and self-efficacy regarding interaction school on the relationship between experiences of microaggressions at the PWI and intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. Thus, self-efficacy is recommended for use in school counseling and career services (Betz, 1992).

Suggestions for Policy Modifications

Previous career services use was positively correlated to TRiO enrollment. PWIs receive funds to provide services and coordinate TRiO programs for minoritized students, such as Black FGSs. Despite the purported benefits of these programs, Blacks comprise 13 percent of the civilian population, make up only 10 percent of undergraduate degree completers (Cahalan et al., 2020), and have the highest cumulative loan amounts, averaging $34,630 in 2016 (Cahalan et al., 2019). Low-income and FGSs have a 21 percent chance of graduating with a bachelor’s degree, compared with a 66 percent chance for those of higher SES and non-FGSs (Cahalan et al., 2020), yet between 1983 and 2016, Black median family wealth decreased by 51 percent (from $7,323 to $3,557), whereas White median family wealth increased by 33 percent (from $110,160 to $146,984), widening the SES gap (Cahalan et al., 2019). Meanwhile, though only 12.9 percent of all Black undergraduates attended HBCUs, HBCUs conferred almost double the amount (21.5%) of all Black undergraduate degrees (Provasnik & Shafer, 2004). HBCUs are known for providing supportive academic environments, increasing chances for student success and social mobility, and having motivated faculty, but lack financial institutional resources for research and faculty compensation (Smith et al., 2020). Thus, funding for TRiO programs should be provided based on accountability measures, including graduation rates, campus climate
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(reported by minoritized faculty and students), and actual social and financial mobility gains made by Black graduates. PWIs should establish anti-oppressive strategic plans and incorporate antiracist policies (Stewart, 2019). Greater diversity is generally associated with more positive attitudes toward minoritized groups (Claypool & Mershon, 2016). However, the dearth of Black faculty representation across departments at PWIs pose undue burdens on the few already marginalized “token” academics (Crichlow, 2017; Lee, 2020). In fact, research showed that student-faculty interaction was not significant in improving racial tolerance for Black students (Kim, 2006). Academic institutions are not neutral spaces and minoritized (e.g., Black) faculty are forced “to conform to the status quo of the dominant group” (Pizarro, 2017, p. 108). The literature is saturated with qualitative and quantitative studies highlighting the experiences of macro- and micro-aggressions, and race-based inequities during academic preparation, disparities in institutional hiring practices, and discriminatory promotion processes (Davis et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2021). Black students and faculty “are targeted for the same bias, social and epistemic exclusion, and disregard,” and over time many develop “stress-related physical and/or mental health conditions” from “the bigoted, hostile feedback to their research, worldviews, and values perpetrated by faculty and classmates” (Buchanan, 2020, p. 102). Black faculty are not only targeted by colleagues and supervisors, but also tormented by White students, as reflected in classroom management and student evaluations of teaching (Miller et al., 2021). The dominant group will not give up their advantage, and the minoritized groups do not have sufficient power to demand and implement actual substantive changes, thus tokenism continues (Lee, 2020).

Finally, educational accreditation and related professional ethics organizations should be actively monitoring their respective accredited programs and credentialed faculty at PWIs, and take disciplinary actions as warranted. For example, by requiring students to pursue and complete internships that pose undue financial, structural, and spatial barriers for minoritized students (e.g., Black FGSs), PWIs reproduce privilege and exacerbate inequality (Hora et al., 2019). Or in response to the previous Executive Order banning diversity training related to systemic racism, minoritized students responded in protest, demanding a change in culture and wanting “to hold the University of Iowa and College of
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Dentistry accountable for the diversity values that they claim to champion” (Quintana, 2021). In turn, Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) adamantly denied that systemic racism exists, particularly in Iowa (Meyer, 2020); however, as one Iowan explained, the “Iowa Nice” trademark goes hand-in-hand with “microaggressions and backhanded compliments [hidden] behind their sweet facades” (Trager, 2020). Circling back to the state’s flagship PWI, another student indicated how “the demotion of African American studies from a PhD-granting department to a program and the high turnover rates of faculty of color across campus are two additional marks that blemish Iowa’s record” (Howard, 2020). The evidence is clear, women and faculty of color have less job security (i.e., tenure) and are paid less than their male, White counterparts, with Black full-time faculty comprising only 6 percent of the professorate (Flaherty, 2020). Demonstrating their commitment to white supremacy, Iowa along with Arkansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Missouri, West Virginia, and South Dakota have introduced bills that would cut funding to K-12 schools, colleges, and universities that teach “divisive concepts” (Flaherty, 2021; Folley, 2021; O’Grady, 2021; Rodriguez, 2021; Skarky, 2021). If the federal government is truly committed to reducing disparities and promoting racial justice equity, they should withhold grant funding from PWIs that continue to sustain white supremacist practices, discriminate against Black students and faculty, and further traumatize, suppress, and oppress marginalized people and communities.

Limitations

While this preliminary study is the first to examine predictors of help-seeking behaviors among Black FGSs for racist career barriers, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of this study. First, this study used data collected by self-report from a convenience sample recruited from TRiO programs, therefore, students not on TRiO listservs may have been excluded. Second, some survey questions were developed for the initial study and not standardized, which may have influenced the reliability of the data. Third, this study only targeted Black FGSs at PWIs, therefore, results may not be generalizable to Black FGSs at non-PWIs or MSIs, such as HBCUs. Finally, the present study used cross-sectional data; therefore, limiting our ability to account for timing between the variables and to make causal inferences.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should examine the policies and procedures at PWIs pertaining to the recruitment, retention, and retainment of Black faculty that work across campus and within career service centers. Although more research is needed, faculty and administrators at PWIs have an ethical duty to take deliberate action and create healthy and diverse academic learning environments.
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(Williams, 2019). Future research should examine employment practices that have been successful in achieving fair and equal representation of minoritized faculty and staff at PWIs. Research should seek to eradicate perceived differences in academic quality between PWIs and HBCUs. Finally, longitudinal studies should test the effects of supports on improving outcomes for this oppressed population, with intersecting minoritized identities (Banning, 2014).

Conclusion

This was the first study to apply Lewin’s field theory (of behavior) to better understand help-seeking for racist career barriers among Black first-generation students (FGSs) attending predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Our findings provide empirical support for using this interactive framework to predict help-seeking behavior, which includes person and environment contextual factors. The final models accounted for 42% of the variance in previous career services use and 51% of the variance in intention to seek counseling for racist career barriers. Antiracist policies must be implemented to curtail the race-based trauma inflicted on Black FGSs. Further research is needed to explain the complex interactive relationships of contextual factors influencing help-seeking for racist career barriers among Black FGSs at oppressive PWIs.

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