Teaching while African: Professional practice and coping strategies in U.S. higher education

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Abstract
In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Africans teaching in higher education in the United States. Their experiences in academia, and the challenges they contend with, are well documented in a growing corpus. This paper presents a review of literature, focusing on coping strategies that Black African faculty [BAF] employ in their professional practice—pedagogy, scholarship, and service—in U.S. higher education. A content analysis of selected texts revealed major themes, including prioritizing survival, calling out racism, engagement in counternarratives, networking to ease transition challenges, relaxing one's pedagogy without abandoning rigor, and a preoccupation with decolonisation of knowledge. This paper draws attention to the limitations of the coping strategies that BAF deploy while emphasising the need for enhancing institutional interventions toward integrating BAF in U.S. higher education.

Keywords: Higher education, African faculty, Black faculty, professional practice, United States, international faculty

1. Introduction

"Teaching while African" in the title of this paper recalls a paper by Patton and Catching that contained the phrase "teaching while Black" in its title. According to the authors, the expression was "coined by Frank Tuitt who first used it to describe the racial profiling of African American scholars" (Patton & Catching 2009, 714). Teaching while African draws attention to yet another racially minoritized population in U.S. higher education (HE): Black African faculty (BAF). In this paper, the term BAF refers to faculty who have contemporary origins in Africa and are Black and can be identified as such. BAF are part of the larger population of foreign-born or international faculty whose numbers have increased in response to internationalization and diversification efforts, which have resulted in greater representation of foreign students and minoritized populations in U.S. HE (Bhandari et al. 2024). While a comprehensive database is not readily available, yearly reports and statistics on international faculty from various sources (such as Open Doors, the Institute for Migration Research, the Migration Policy Institute, and the Institute of International Education) indicate a steady increase of BAF in U.S. HE. Like all faculty members, BAF engage in key functions that comprise their professional practice. These functions include teaching / pedagogy, scholarship, and service (Hunter 2025).

There is not much scholarship that has targeted BAF's professional practice in the relevant broader literatures. The literature on international or immigrant faculty is replete with studies highlighting experiences, contributions, issues, and challenges, along with needed support systems for their integration and success in professional practice (Biswas 2023; Lee 2021; Loya 2024). However, as this literature is broad in scope, including individuals from different parts of the world, it often fails to address the nuances in this population that may translate to vastly different experiences for individuals. BAF are underrepresented in this literature. BAFs are also underrepresented in other pertinent literatures. For example, the literature on faculty diversity in U.S. HE tends to focus on faculty of colour irrespective of origin and cultural background (see Griffin 2020; Hunter 2025; Masters-Waage et al. 2023; Writer & Watson 2019). As is the case in the international faculty scholarship mentioned above, the nuances of the BAF experience can go unnoticed.

Another example is the literature on Black or African American faculty in the U.S. Noting the underrepresentation of BAF in this literature, Boafo-Arthur and Tsevi noted that,

Because most Black African Faculty in the U.S. are categorized as "African American," their experiences are often discussed as part of the Black minority experience. Moreover, they are not separated from African Americans who were born and raised in the United States . . . [F]inding literature that specifically focuses on Black African Faculty is especially difficult (Boafo-Arthur & Tsevi 2021, 21).

The paucity of BAF literature referenced in this quote is evident in academic journal database searches, using a combination of relevant search terms. One search conducted for this paper revealed that a single peer-reviewed journal—Multicultural Learning and Teaching—contained most of the journal articles published between 2000 and 2025, with two issues (2010 and 2022) dedicated to BAF voices. Few articles were found in other journals. However, although contained in a handful of edited books, the number of book chapters on BAF have increased since 2000. This growing scholarship offers important perspectives that enhance understanding of what it means for a Black African to work as faculty in U.S HE.

The literature underlines two things germane to understanding BAF's professional practice. The first one is that BAF's professional practice in U.S. HE occurs within racially-related challenges. The challenges fall into two categories presented by Breen et al. (2024) in their analysis of barriers that inclusion efforts in U.S. HE: structural and human action-related. Structural barriers include an institution's history, organization, and culture, while active barriers revolve around "human action, inaction, and decision-making" that are racist and undermine inclusion efforts (p. 533). BAF literature expresses that many of the challenges that BAF face on these two levels are constructed within "a process of power relations" rooted in U.S. and global racial configurations (Mfum-Mensah 2016, 150). Negative stereotypes of Black, Africa and Africanness abound in these configurations.

The second key observation made in the BAF literature is that BAF's ability to navigate racially-related barriers is complicated by their intersectional identities (Harushimana 2022; Mfum-Mensah 2016; Nwakanma 2020; Ofolayan 2010). The literature emphasises that the "trilogy identity of their Black-ness (color), Accentness (how they sound), and Africanness (their native continent)" (Mfum-Mensah 2016, 144) presents unique barriers for BAF in the racialized U.S. HE context. For males, the BAF experience is characterized by the "quadruple jeopardy of being Black, male, African, and with the "heavy" accent" (Ofolayan 2010, 107). Harushimana wrote about the constant battle for acceptance, credibility, and respect faced by Black African female faculty that are

"exacerbated by her national origin (Afriphobia), the heavy, non-western accent (linguicism), the white-attributed savagism, and other negative stereotypes" (Harushimana 2022, 138). In this literature, BAF's intersectional identities present experiences that may differ from other faculty of colour in U.S. HE. The same may be said about their coping strategies.

The current study reviewed extant BAF literature to reveal the coping strategies that BAF employ in their professional practice in the U.S. academy. One overarching question guided the study: What coping strategies do BAF use in their professional practice within the racialized U.S. HE context? A discussion of these strategies may serve to inform prospective and newly employed BAF on the realities of working in U.S. HE; perhaps they can glean strategies that might work well for them. Others in higher education can also learn about—and from—the professional practices of the often-muted voices of colleagues who are African and Black. The findings may also inform diversity efforts in U.S. HE.

2. Theoretical framework

This study uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) to explore the coping strategies that BAF use in their professional practice. CRT has been used widely in the literatures on the experiences of immigrant and U.S.-born faculty of colour. CRT tenets frequently referenced in this literature that are relevant to the current study include: centrality of race and racism, intersectionality, and prioritising experiential knowledge (Harushimana 2022; Hernández 2024; Mickles-Burns 2024; Orelus 2020). CRT's tenet on centrality of race and racism has been used to underline that "American academia remains a predominantly White institution. Race shapes nearly all facets of American academia starting from the hiring process, retention, to promotion. American academia is yet to be an inclusive institution for professors of color" (Orelus 2020, 123). Acknowledging pervasiveness of racism and academia as a White space allows scholars to explore the racialized experiences of minoritized faculty.

Intersectionality, which is a key CRT tenet, emphasises that race and racism overlap with other forms of subordination, and that oppression directed at marginalized groups is not expressed the same (Mwangi et al. 2019). As noted above, BAF's intersectional identities present unique challenges in their professional practices. The third CRT tenet that informs the current study is the prioritisation of the experiential knowledge of people of colour. This tenet emphasises recognising this knowledge as "legitimate, a strength, and critical to understanding racial subordination" (Mickles-Burns 2024, 139). When their experiences are

centred, people of colour offer counternarratives that debunk racist narratives about them (Harushimana 2022). The current study acknowledges the importance of BAF voices in articulating how they experience U.S. HE. As will be discussed in later sections, these three CRT tenets offer a useful framework for understanding BAF's coping strategies in the racialized U.S HE context.

3. The Study

3.1. Methodology

This paper was informed by a review of recent journal articles and book chapters on BAF's professional practice in U.S. HE. The texts explored were published between 2000 and 2025. Excluded from review were unpublished works and other texts such as reports and opinion pieces. A journal article or book chapter was included if it was written by or focused solely on BAF; studies that included other individuals were excluded. A qualitative textual analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) was conducted on the fifty texts selected for this study. As a first step, this author read each journal article or book chapter to gain a general feel for it, noting the methodological approach used and mentions of the elements of professional practice (teaching, scholarship, and service). In a second reading, this author paid attention to discussions by the authors around identity and intersections with professional practice, noting the reported coping strategies deployed. Open codes were developed through identifying frequently used terms and expressions in discussions of strategies related to professional practice. Codes were then sorted into potential themes, "collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes" (Braun & Clarke 2006, 89). Themes were refined through multiple readings of the texts, while identifying compelling excerpts to illustrate each theme.

3.2. Findings

3.2.1. Survival through assertiveness. "Survival" and related terms such as "navigating" were used in many of the reviewed texts to characterize the experience of BAF in racialized U.S. HE. Racist structures and individuals heighten what Grant (2020) has referred to as "boundaries of African inclusion" in the academy. BAF work in institutions where exclusion of faculty of colour is built into history, structures, culture, and human actions. The reviewed texts highlighted the need for BAF to be assertive and tap into their strengths and Africanness in order to navigate, survive, and thrive. As Mfum-Mensah stressed, "assertiveness is needed

to carve a space and survive in the professoriate" (Mfum-Mensah 2016, 152). He sees assertiveness, along with "having good negation skills" and "maintain[ing] a positive personal identity," as necessary and insists that "reclaiming and reinventing our Africanness in a diasporized context is not an option but is necessary for survival and sanity" (p. 153). Many of the reviewed texts coded for the survival theme indicated that assertiveness grounded in Africanness can be used as a tool for affirmation, self-preservation, and responding to racial injustice. It is critical for survival.

However, a small number of texts stressed evasive strategies. For example, Nayenga implied that BAF should keep a low profile early in their career, underlining only pursuing "'nonthreatening' administrative assignments" (Nayenga 2016, 137). Koti (2021) advised BAF to be team players and to stay away from "fractions and camps," and Obi (2010) cautioned hypervigilance and flight as necessary tactics for BAF's survival. Evasive strategies suggest that, as a racialized space, HE compels many BAF to shrink themselves to avoid creating "waves" or drawing unnecessary attention. The reviewed texts coded for the survival theme urged careful consideration of one's own positionality in the deployment of survival strategies; whether these are assertive, evasive, or a mix. Second, across most of the reviewed texts, the onus was placed mainly on the BAF to deploy strategies that would ensure their survival in academia. Only a few texts critiqued institutional structures for creating environments that required the deployment of survival strategies. Even fewer outlined institutional strategies that would work to bring about transformation.

3.2.2. Calling out "everyday racism." Orelus observed that "Being racially discriminated against in the academy has been normalized, as minority professors and students are routinely subjected to the daily gaze and harm of institutionalized racism" (Orelus 2020, 120). The reviewed texts acknowledged that BAF experienced "American everyday racism" (Nayenga 2016) in HE, cautioning against the "naïve expectation that academia treated everybody with fairness" (Harushimana 2022, 138). BAF viewed racism as the root cause of the silencing, paternalism, condescension, assumed inferiority, overwork, discrimination, exploitation and other marginalizing behaviours they face in the workplace. Regarding overwork, for example, many texts lamented the expectation that BAF have to work "twice as hard" (Woldegiyorgis, 2021). Yet, hard work was often dismissed by colleagues—BAF are "too ambitious"—and often resulted in negative repercussions, including silencing and dismissal

of their work (Kamina 2011; Kamya 2022; Mfum-Mensah 2016; Obi 2010; Woldegiyorgis 2021). Exploitation and blatant discrimination based on race, accent, and national origin, sometimes in front of students, were also discussed at length in many texts (Akomolafe 2020; Ikpeze 2013; Obi 2010 and 2022; Ukpokodu 2022).

Generally, the reviewed texts showed a deep awareness of how the systemic, pervasive, and insidious nature of racism present in U.S. society—and how it filters into HE—affects BAF's professional practices. Some of the texts went beyond enumerating and describing racist experiences and the personal and professional toll they exerted; they underlined the need to call out institutionalized and everyday racism. Calling people or institutions out involves publicly letting them know that their words or actions are oppressive (Jewell 2020). The texts cautioned that calling institutions and/or colleagues out could attract more marginalization and isolation, and heighten "race battle fatigue" (Pizarro and Kohli 2020). However, they stopped short of detailing much-needed specific actions by HE institutions toward ending racism.

3.2.4. Asserting voice and centering self through counternarratives. Many of the reviewed texts identified counter-storying, which is a foundational precept of CRT, as an assertive tool for claiming ground against racism and the resultant marginalization in HE. BAF emphasised that telling their stories gave them a voice and drew them closer to BAF for solidarity, while also alerting colleagues and higher education institutions to areas of concern. Underlining the centrality of voice, Kamya noted:

In looking for and exercising my voice, I am learning how to show kindness to myself. It is exhausting to live in these spaces. I need to find a place to process my vulnerability. . .. I need to step back and say that it is OK, that I do not need to perform for white spaces. I am learning to set better boundaries. I keep seeking affirming places where my voice can be heard. . .. I have so much to offer and do not need the blessing of the structures that historically shut us down. Walking away with our heads held high is just as important (Kamya 2022, 194).

As illustrated in this excerpt, BAF used counter-storying to reclaim their voice and to anchor "selfhood" (Ifedi 2017). Counternarratives served as a "way of self-transformation, a way of unlearning privileged narratives, and a way of transforming our workplaces" (Moyo 2013, 72). Harushimana referred to counternarratives as "a trenchant weapon" that can help

confront "xenophobia, linguicism, racism, prejudice, and sexism" faced by BAF (Harushimana 2022, 148).

In the reviewed texts coded for this theme—counternarrative—the discussions highlighted important roles individuals could play in pushing back on entrenched dominant narratives about them. Counternarratives demanded BAF tap into the creativity, strength, and resourcefulness often associated with Africanness. However, while grit and resilience were applauded, there was little discussion on the role of HE institutions in bringing about the desired transformation.

3.2.3. Networking to ease transition and mitigate marginalization. Isolation and marginalization were among the main experiences observed in most of the reviewed texts. The texts identified networking within the BAF community, other communities of colour, and social groups as a useful strategy for easing transition into HE and mitigating isolation and marginalization. Networking was also viewed as self-care (Nayenga 2016; Mfum-Mensah 2016; Odhiambo 2016; Woldegiyorgis 2021; Obiakor 2010). Woldegiyorgis (2021) emphasised that strengthening networks and connections, with individuals and higher education institutions back home in Africa, could also enrich BAF's professional practice. Additional benefits of networking mentioned in multiple texts included psychological affirmation and belongingness, love of country, paying back/forward, social responsibility, political interests, assuaging "brain drain" guilt, commitment to "brain circulation," and stability/cultural development of their own children.

Lastly, networking could yield the much-needed mentorship from BAF and other individuals of colour. Many texts indicated that BAF-on-BAF mentoring is most useful. Networking and mentoring that celebrated Africanness were applauded. They were viewed as much-needed resources to fight exclusion, isolation, and marginalization; affirm identity; enhance personal and social wellbeing; and fortify against racism. However, as in the themes above, most reviewed texts placed responsibility for seeking out and sustaining needed networks on the individual BAF instead of HE.

3.2.5. Relaxing pedagogy without abandoning rigor. Alexander defined pedagogy as "the observable act of teaching together with its attendant discourses, ideas and values" (Alexander 2009, 14) and advised a careful understanding of these elements in their cultural contexts. The reviewed texts identified pedagogy in HE as a site of stress and contestation for BAF due to Afriphobia, xenophobia, and the anti-Black racism prevalent in the U.S. As the

reviewed texts indicated, challenges that BAF experience in pedagogy can be categorized into two broad areas: functional, or related to Africanness. The first category calls for quick learning by BAF about their new contexts and adjusting their instruction and perspectives. These adjustments include adopting strategies that allow for more student participation during lessons, providing study guides, incorporating technology, adjusting grading practices, pacing their teaching, using guest speakers, and not taking student course critiques personally. In the second category—challenges related to Africanness—the reviewed texts that highlighted pedagogical challenges described the power dynamics in a racialized context, often between BAF and White students. Under these circumstances, adjusting one's pedagogy was insufficient. For example, Zaier and Maina (2023) cautioned faculty to anticipate that innovative and learner-centered teaching strategies that are applauded when applied by others may not produce the same results for BAF, due to cultural and racial profiling, mainly by students.

Anticipating that many students would react to their Africanness by bringing bias and stereotypes into the classroom, many BAF proactively included in-class conversations and readings related to these topics at the beginning of each semester (Nayenga 2016; Mfum-Mensah 2016); inculcated "glocal competence" through study abroad experiences (Gichiru 2016); employed culturally responsive teaching strategies, including using one's biography as a teaching tool (Ikpeze 2013); and taught against students' "defensive moves" such as "interest discordance," "assertion of racial privilege," and "need for safety" (Mthethwa-Sommers 2013). Some BAF also carefully used "humor and irony to dispel stubborn one-sided stereotypes" (Johnston-Anumonwo 2020), while others gave "offending" students "some words of advice, culturally and professionally" (Afolayan 2010).

Most reviewed texts concurred that inflexibility in the classroom, particularly in addressing functional challenges, can end careers in HE. They also acknowledged the existence of pedagogical challenges related to negative perceptions of Africanness that persist despite BAF's best efforts. Some texts touched on ways that institutions exacerbate the negative experiences of BAF: by relying heavily on biased student evaluations to make decisions on careers of faculty, failing to defend BAF in the face of racist and xenophobic attacks by students, failing to create affirming work environments, and failing to acknowledge the "extra cultural tax" (Tetteh et al. 2023) exerted on BAF. In the texts coded

for this theme, discussions focused on action by individual BAF and, to a lesser extent, HE institutions.

3.2.6. Decolonising knowledge. Decolonising HE was identified in the reviewed texts as necessary for BAF to survive and thrive. Texts coded for the "decolonising knowledge" theme underlined the need for decolonising action on both the individual and institutional level. At the individual level, BAF were urged to decolonize their own minds—a concept popularized by the Kenyan novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o—and knowledge construction in academia. BAF decolonize their minds when they "deconstruct the ways in which knowledge production and development in pedagogy, as well as research, perpetuates the realities of power dynamics and possible sites of contestation for African scholars in North American academies and beyond" (Nwakanma 2020, 170). Many texts coded for this theme recognized that deconstruction requires "efforts and skilful negotiations" (Mfum-Mensah 2016) with HE institutions. They also stressed that while knowledge deconstruction can easily cause friction, suspicion, or further marginalization (Mfum-Mensah 2016; Mutua 2010; Nayenga 2016; Nkabinde 2013), such work is needed to fully integrate BAF and other minoritized faculty in U.S. HE.

The texts highlighted several structural changes needed to bring about change. Many of the texts, for example, demanded an inclusive HE curriculum that challenged stereotypes about Africa and Africans, while acknowledging that most of this design work would fall on BAF. An expansive curriculum would provide BAF with opportunities to speak "in their own voices, and where they will be treated as creators of knowledge." (Nkabinde 2013, 83). In addition to an inclusive curriculum, the texts underlined the importance of having a critical mass of BAF in place. They urged HE institutions to establish programmes and initiatives that would bring more BAF and notable Africans to campus (Nayenga 2016; Keita 2020). Additionally, they advocated for the strengthening of institutional partnerships with African countries to facilitate knowledge (de)construction (Misako 2020; Woldegiyorgis 2021). More than in the five themes discussed above, the texts coded for this theme underlined institutional responsibility and pointed to specific interventions (such as inclusive curriculum, demographic representation, and institutional partnerships) to spur the needed transformation in HE.

4. Discussion of the findings in relation to the broader literature

This study reviewed relevant journal articles and book chapters in order to understand the coping strategies that BAF deploy in their professional practice to facilitate integration into U.S. HE. Drawing on CRT, several coping strategies were highlighted in the six themes discussed in Section 3.2: prioritizing survival, calling out everyday racism, engagement in counternarratives, networking to ease transition challenges, relaxing one's pedagogy without abandoning rigor, and a preoccupation with the politics of knowledge production. This section discusses the context for and limitations of these strategies; it draws from the broader literature to emphasise the need for unequivocal institutional commitments to BAF and other faculty of colour.

4.1. Context. To understand the coping strategies deployed by BAF in their professional practices, one needs to appreciate the context within which they were devised. The texts reviewed for this paper revealed highly qualified and experienced BAF. Most of these BAF held teaching jobs in primary, secondary, or tertiary institutions in their home countries prior to embarking on master's/doctoral work and subsequent teaching in the U.S. However, their expertise and degrees earned were often invalidated in U.S. HE, mainly due to the "triple" and "quadruple" racially- and culturally-related barriers outlined in Section 1.

In the reviewed texts, racism was identified as pervasive and enduring in U.S. HE, echoing a similar observation made in the broader literature on faculty of colour experiences (Hunter 2025; Orelus 2020; Ward & Hall 2022). For BAF, racial marginalization is often exacerbated by negative perceptions related to their Africanness. Many of the reviewed texts highlighted the devastating impact of racial marginalization on BAF's wellbeing and professional practice. While the texts identified strategies such as networking, mentoring, counternarratives, and calling out everyday racism as useful, they mainly presented them as being driven by agency of the individual BAF. In two out of the six coping strategies—relaxing pedagogy without abandoning rigor, and decolonising knowledge—the reviewed texts underscored the need to change oppressive institutional structures and not just the professional practice of individual BAF. The paragraphs below draw from relevant literature on diversity in higher education, immigrant faculty, and faculty of colour to emphasise three possible areas within which the shift toward dislodging entrenched institutionalized and systemic barriers that adversely affect BAF can be augmented. These include ensuring

demographic representation; implementing formal support systems to mitigate racism (including racial literacy and culturally responsive mentoring systems); and enhancing "pedagogical democracy."

4.2.1. Demographic representation. Many of the reviewed texts described how isolation, discrimination, marginalization, silencing, exploitation, and overwork impede BAF's integration in U.S. higher education. Their underrepresentation on campuses makes their plight invisible, rendering their coping strategies largely ineffective. Literature on diversity in higher education decry the slow pace of diversifying the faculty, noting that "the demographic characteristics of the professoriate look remarkably similar to the faculty of 50 years ago" (Griffin 2020). Writer & Watson (2019) called for "authentic commitment from institutions to recruit, hire, and retain faculty of color" (p. 28). Their proposed recruitment strategies may be useful to efforts directed at bolstering BAF representation. These include "carefully constructed search committees and cluster and target hiring, and grow your own initiatives" (p. 35). In the case of BAF, "grow your own" initiatives or pipeline programmes can be especially effective. Such programmes would encourage and support promising Black African graduate students "to teach as adjunct instructors or lecturers in institutions in which they are currently employed in route to possibly obtaining faculty positions at their home institution" (p. 36). As a structural intervention, such programmes can help mitigate marginalization based on structures designed to exclude faculty of colour, and on negative perceptions of Africanness that BAF face when seeking employment in HE. Recruitment strategies and hiring practices that alleviate both structural and human action barriers (Breen et al. 2025) can help build a critical mass of BAF in U.S. HE.

4.2.2. Implementing formal support systems to mitigate racism. As noted in Section 3, in the reviewed texts, BAF showed a deep awareness of the systemic, pervasive, and insidious nature of racism present in U.S. society and how it affected their professional practices. The coping strategies they deployed in this regard included counter-storying, calling out everyday racism, and networking to mitigate isolation and enhance mentoring. However, as noted previously, the texts stopped short of detailing much-needed specific actions by HE toward ending racism and related marginalization. Existing literature confirms that faculty of colour

experience racism (Mickles-Burns 2024) and receive differential treatment in promotion and tenure which contribute to their underrepresentation in higher education (Masters-Waage et al. 2024). The literature underlines that in U.S. HE, racism is institutionalized through institutional structures and human agency (Breen et al. 2025). The entrenched and pervasive nature of racism calls for interventions that target both levels.

Mickles-Burns (2024) demanded that higher education mitigate the adverse effects of racism on faculty of colour by "holding management and leadership accountable" for such transformation (p. 149). Implementing racial literacy for leadership and faculty is one way to show accountability. Racial literacy may comprise training of the leadership and faculty on non-biased hiring practices, as well as identifying racial and cultural bias in tenure and promotion decisions (Mickles-Burns 2024; Masters-Waage et al. 2024). However, this focus on individual agency must be paired with institutional accountability toward overhauling racist structures. This may include establishment of carefully crafted retention measures, such as, "onboarding, orientation, and mentoring"; establishing "sanctuary spaces"; and implementing policies geared toward offsetting the "service stress" that many BAF and faculty of colour experience (Writer & Watson 2019, 36). Regarding mentoring, which was identified in the reviewed texts as a useful BAF coping strategy, it is important to emphasise here the need for implementing culturally responsive mentoring systems (Harushimana 2022). For example, higher education institutions would be held responsible for matching new BAF with senior BAF and other faculty of colour within or outside the institution. Mentors and mentees would be expected to meet frequently, and financial resources made available for mentor-mentee activities.

4.2.3. Enhancing professional practice democracy. In the reviewed texts, BAF decried the devaluing of their stellar accomplishments in their professional practices (Harushimana, 2022; Kamya 2022; Obi 2022; Obiakor 2022; Ukpokodu 2022). To cope, they adopted a mix of assertive strategies–such as knowledge deconstruction– and evasive ones, including keeping a low profile in their institutions. BAF expressed the view that U.S. HE should view them as assets (Gahungu 2021) and value the contributions (pedagogy, research, and service) that they bring to institutions. In other words, HE should strive to enhance "professional practice democracy" of BAF.

The term professional practice democracy is adapted from Rao et al., who noted the pervasive "pedagogical othering" experienced by international/migrant faculty in U.S. HE, and opined that this othering is based on the prevailing "pedagogical supremacy." They describe it as the "dominant pedagogical ideas or ideologies [that] . . . 'become the "ruling ideas" of the age' without being challenged or questioned" (Rao et al. 2019, 600). They argue that what they refer to as "pedagogical democracy" could be achieved when the academy embraces the plurality of pedagogical ideas and approaches, thus reducing the othering experienced by migrant and minoritized faculty. When such an ideological shift occurs, priorities change from "successfully integrating 'subordinate classes' into the [dominant] 'value' system" to 'integrating the pedagogical philosophies of migrant academics into the cultural networks of their institutions" (Rao et al. 2019, 609).

Professional practice democracy derives from this argument for shifting priorities and extends beyond teaching to include the other two aspects of professional practice: research and service. Enhancing professional practice democracy for BAFs may include the freedom to design courses they consider useful and engaging without the fear of losing their jobs, funded opportunities to engage in research and service close to their passions and identities, and enhancing institutional partnerships with African universities. Such practices would essentially convey that BAF's Africanness is valued.

5. Conclusion

This paper sought to illuminate coping strategies employed by BAF in their professional practice within the racialized context of U.S. HE. The strategies, which were discussed within the six themes gleaned from the reviewed texts, were responses to the many challenges that BAF contend with in their professional practice. Most of the challenges identified relate to racism and Africanness. The discussion also stressed that, in four of the six themes, the coping strategies BAF deployed to counter these challenges underscored individual agency on the side of BAF and limited accountability on the part of institutions. Noting this trend as well as the unwillingness of higher education to fully integrate BAF and other minoritized faculty of colour, this paper has argued for more institutional accountability toward transformation.

Three areas are highlighted for possible action at the institutional level: ensuring demographic representation, implementing support systems, and enhancing professional

practice democracy. Although such interventions might be hindered by the current push from the anti-diversity movement in U.S. HE (Harper 2025), higher education institutions that are committed to excellence recognize the need to keep their campuses diverse. This paper underlines that such institutions should engage in nuanced listening of BAF voices as they articulate particular challenges they face and institutional strategies that might work. They may understand that customary interventions directed at international faculty and African American faculty may not be sufficient for BAF. Additionally, such institutions need to undertake impact assessments of their interventions toward integrating minoritized faculty—particularly BAF—in U.S. higher education. This would help build a robust repertoire of useful strategies from which higher education could draw.

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