

ACKNOWLEDGING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND GENDER:
SUPPORTING AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN
COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by

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(Under the Direction of Anneliese A. Singh)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is structured in a non-traditional format allowing the primary researcher to seek journal publication in effort to promote awareness and advocate on behalf of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education. Chapter one introduces the experiences of African-American women as a unique group that deserves attention beyond the singular identity-focus of race or gender (Bowman & King, 2003). Chapter two is a separate conceptual article with a comprehensive literature review. Chapter three is also a separate conceptual article and qualitative study including a review of the literature, findings, and references. Chapter four examines the reflexivity of the primary researcher, and implications to continue future research on African-American women doctoral students using the contextually-appropriate theoretical lenses of Womanism (Walker, 1983) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996).

A phenomenological approach to understand the essence of African-American women doctoral students' experiences in counselor education programs as they related to race and gender was documented. Using intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) and Womanism (Walker, 1983) as theoretical frameworks, the primary researcher sought to understand how the general

academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education were impacted by the intersection of race and gender. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) is used in this study to examine how multiple sources of oppression intersect for African-American women doctoral students (Bastia, 2014), and how the intersection of race and gender explains their academic experience in counselor education programs. The use of Womanism (Walker, 1983) in this study seeks not only to understand the specific experiences of African-American women and how their intersecting identities influence their educational experiences, but center the experiences of African-American women who have been historically made invisible in the academic setting and within counseling literature (Grant, 2012).

This study was a response to the limited amount of literature that center the experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education, and the lack of attention towards the unique needs of African-American women in academia. Additional research is warranted in this area due to the significant amount of literature focused on marginalized groups but fail to acknowledge the intersection of multiple marginalized identities (Grant, 2012). Increased awareness for the needs of African-American women doctoral students and women of color in general in higher education are crucial for counselor educators who wish to recruit, retain, and graduate this group of students from their academic programs.

INDEX WORDS: African-American Women, Women of Color, Counselor Education, Doctoral Students, Womanism, Intersectionality, Phenomenology

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DEDICATION

For my mom, Linda Dale Carter.

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I...I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” -Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken

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CHAPTER 1

THE INTRODUCTION OF RACE AND GENDER: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Prelude

Only the Black Woman can say ‘when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole...race enters with me.

-Anna Julia Cooper, 1892/1988, p. 31

In 1969, two college students, Patricia and William, both Black students at a local state college, were invited by a mutual friend to attend a prestigious men’s club for a celebration that evening. The men’s club, known for its memberships of past United States presidents and other influential white men, was giving a celebration to acknowledge its first Black members. Patricia and William’s mutual friend, Martin, was one of the club’s fewest Black members. Martin invited Patricia and William to join him for the celebration because the club had finally decided to open its doors to its first Black members and guests after nearly two-hundred years. That evening, Patricia and William approached the large brass doors to the club and knocked on the door. The giant doors opened to a large ballroom of dancing men and women, mostly white, and the smell of rich foods flowed out from the doors and into the streets where Patricia and William stood. They were greeted by Martin and another White male, but as Patricia and William moved to enter the ballroom the white male standing beside Martin motioned for them to stop. He

casually turned to Martin, whispered in his ear, and turned to walk back inside the ballroom just as a white couple, a man and woman, entered the ballroom in front of him. Confused, Patricia and William looked to Martin for an answer. Martin explained that the club had not yet opened its doors to Black women, and if she wanted to join she would have to enter through the club's back entrance. Insulted at this sudden turn of events, Patricia considered making a scene to emphasize the point that discrimination based on gender was equally as painful as discrimination based on race, but quickly reconsidered. Patricia recognized that by making a scene at an event that had just opened its doors to Black students would in some way jeopardize all of them and future Black members, and, after all, she would still be allowed to join the celebration. She would just have to enter through the back door. Considering this, Martin and William went inside the ballroom, and Patricia turned back towards the street to walk around to the back entrance.

The story of Patricia, William, and Martin is a minimally-modified true story told as a personal account by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) in *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. The story is included here to emphasize the importance of acknowledging the intersection of race and gender in the lived experiences of African-American women. This story provides a variety of layers surrounding privilege and identity. Although the generational barriers that prevented Black memberships from joining the exclusive men's club had been removed and though Patricia and William were allowed to be a part of the celebration, the way in which Patricia had to enter the ballroom to join the celebration contradicted what the celebration claimed to be about altogether. Therefore, this story invites a complex question: Was this an act of social justice on behalf of the Black students in this story? There are those who would say yes

because all three students were allowed to attend the event, and the club had removed its ban against Black members. The author of this chapter, however, would disagree. In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper stated, “Only the Black Woman can say ‘when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole race enters with me.’” Until Patricia is provided with the same privileges, opportunities for access, and recognized as an equally valuable member of society, and worthy of walking through the front door of any establishment will social justice truly be served for Black people.

The focus of this dissertation is the intersection of race and gender on the lived experiences of women of color doctoral students, specifically African-American doctoral students, in counselor education programs. This group of students is emphasized because they are likely to find themselves in a similar situation or encountering an experience parallel to Patricia in the previous story. Although the doors of academia and graduate school have been opened to African-American doctoral students, African-American women may not be provided the same privileges, level of support, and opportunities for access as other doctoral students. In addition, they may have to contend with negative images and stereotypes about African-American women, being perceived as incapable of academic success, and other academic and social barriers that create additional challenges due to their intersecting identities as women and persons of color (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013).

The Challenges African-American Women Experience in Current Academia

African-American women in higher education today may continue dealing with the interpersonal struggles that troubled African-American women of the twentieth century, such as seeking education to support the African-American community or seeking education to fulfill

personal desires in leadership, professional recognition, and careers unrelated to human service (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). In addition to these struggles, African-American women must also navigate the terrain of higher education, and, as a result, finding one's identity and self-definition can be a complex and painful experience (Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, Pratt, & Jaddo, 2011). According to Fordham (1993) being taken seriously is the mantra for African-American women in education because they must receive a level of education that will prepare them to survive in a world that was not designed with them in mind. African-American women in education may also believe they must dissociate from the negative stereotypes associated with African-American women to be taken seriously (i.e. sapphires, jezebels, mammies, welfare queens, the angry black woman) (Austin, 1996; Fordham, 1993). As a result, African-American women in academia may not actively engage in the classroom for fear of being associated with those stereotypes. As such, African-American women in counselor education programs may also share similar experiences, and may not become actively involved in their academic environment, particularly when situated in a predominantly white classroom or institution. This fear of being associated with negative stereotypes may potentially reduce African-American doctoral students to silence and invisibility in the academic setting. In contrast, Fordham (1993) suggest that some African-American women resist the socialization to silence and invisibility in the academy for the price of academic success, but those who resist are eventually thwarted in the academy for their failure to participate in their own exclusion.

Academic and social challenges and barriers affect African-American women at the pre-doctoral and post-doctoral stages of higher education (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). In addition to being consistently burdened with the responsibility of demystifying stereotypes and negative images of black womanhood, African-American women

may experience a heightened level of insecurity in academia known as stereotype threat, imposter syndrome, and survivor's guilt (Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013; Sule, 2014). All of which are a result of surviving in a racist, sexist, and classist society that leads African-American women to feel inferior or invaluable, and unintentionally causes them to subconsciously believe in their own inferiority (Helen, 2009).

Representation of African-American Women Doctoral Students

The number of African-American women entering doctoral programs and eventually faculty positions at various colleges and universities has been steadily increasing since the 21st century (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). The Chronicle for Higher Education (2010) revealed that in the fall of 2009, African-American women represented the largest proportion of female faculty of color at 8.6%. However, despite their increasing presence as faculty members in higher education, African-American female faculty are still least represented in tenured positions and in positions of leadership, such as deans or university presidents. There is a growing body of literature related to higher education that calls for more female faculty of color, specifically for African-American women (Alexander, 2010; Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Helen, 2009; Collins, 2007). Alexander (2010) believes that increasing the number of African-American female students attaining their doctorates will consequently lead to an increase in the diversity of applicants considered eligible for these leadership positions. Undoubtedly, Alexander's request for more female faculty of color is directed towards predominantly white or predominantly male institutions. The author's solution for increasing the amount of African-American women eligible to receive positions of power within higher education is both logical and optimistic. However, when considering the discriminatory practices put in place within predominantly white or predominantly male

institutions, specifically designed to prevent women of color from attaining positions of power, suggests that support models and advocacy on behalf of women of color doctoral students is warranted. Therefore support on behalf of African-American women is crucial to their academic success. Recruiting African-American women doctoral students is not enough. Faculty of doctoral programs should support African-American women during their enrollment, and support African-American women towards graduation from doctoral programs.

Needs of African-American Women Doctoral Students

The experiences of women and men within a racial group may be as different as their experiences across other cultural identity groups (Bowman & King, 2003). African-American women seeking a doctoral education may find themselves isolated in their academic pursuits, having to combat stereotypes strategically designed to prevent their success, and navigating the academic culture and unwritten rules of graduate school that are aligned with those in power (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Sule, 2014). African-American women in counselor education programs may attain an outsider-within status during graduate study, especially in predominantly white institutions, and can lead to an alienating experience in the academic setting (Harris, 2012). Some research studies have found that women of color in academia believed they had to take on a “race-less” persona in order to be successful at predominantly white institutions (Sule, 2014). A race-less persona is described as the absence of behavioral and attitudinal characteristics associated with a specified racial group, and essentially rejecting one’s racial identity (Fordham, 1993; Sule, 2014). African-American women may feel forced to acclimate to white culture when pursuing doctoral study, specifically within predominantly white institutions (Coleman, 2004). As a result, African-American women pursuing doctoral study are required to develop the competence of white culture as a stepping

stone to academic success (Coleman, 2004). As mentioned earlier, prior studies suggest mentoring to assist with African-American doctoral students' experiences of isolation (Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013; Grant, 2012; Grant & Simmons, 2008); however, many of the challenges faced by African-American female doctoral students at predominantly white institutions require efforts that extend beyond traditional aspects of mentoring (Grant & Simmons, 2008).

Singular Identity Categories and How Essentialism Fails to Support African-American Women Doctoral Students in Counselor Education Programs

Evans and Barker (2010) found that counseling education programs taught identity categories as separate and distinct forms of individual identity. The study by Evans and Barker (2010) focused on sexual identity, and acknowledged how these singular identity categories fail to address the complex, connectedness of multiple identities, such as race, class, and gender. Similarly to the Evans and Barker (2010) study, this chapter argues that counselor education programs also fail to acknowledge the intersecting identities of African-American women doctoral students and how their intersecting identities influence their academic experiences in counselor education programs, and subsequently their future professional identities as counselor educators. Singular identity categorization has been used in counselor education programs as a component of multicultural and diversity training, particularly as a means to prepare future counselor educators about how groups of people with shared characteristics develop cognitively and socially (Bowman & King, 2003; Coleman, 2004). Examples of singular identity models include racial identity, sexual identity, and identity based on gender. These examples are recognized as singular identity categories because they address one specific aspect of identity, and disregards how aspects of individual identity may also contribute to one's lived experiences.

Singular identity categories fail to acknowledge the complex experiences of persons with intersecting identities, inevitably promoting an essentialist interpretation of an individual's experience (Colemen, Norton, Miranda, & McCubbin, 2003). Essentialism is the idea that all people who share a singular characteristic also share the same experiences (Colemen et al., 2003). Consider the effectiveness of singular identity categories, specifically racial identity, when addressing the distinct needs of persons of color from an essentialist standpoint. If looking at race alone, a counselor educator might reach out to every African-American doctoral student with the assumption that they share the exact same challenges, interests, and attitudes with the true intention of supporting this population. Despite these good intentions, however, every African-American doctoral student will have uniquely different needs when other salient identities are acknowledged in combination with race, such as gender, class, or sexual identity together (Evans & Barker, 2010). The needs of a middle-class African-American transgender doctoral student will be significantly different from the needs of an African-American female student who is a first generation doctoral student from an economically-disadvantaged background. Therefore an essentialist approach towards student advocacy is considered ineffective because singular identity categories do not address the distinct needs of every student and their intersecting identities. In fact, singular identity categories may overlook the true experiences of persons with intersecting identities. Individuals who are unable to "fit in" to one singular identity may feel misrepresented when other aspects of their identity are minimized or ignored altogether (Bowman & King, 2003; Coleman et al., 2003).

Embracing Intersectionality to Support African-American Women Doctoral Students

No other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have Black women...when Black people are talked about the focus tends to be on

Black men; and when women are talked about the focus tends to be on White women. -bell hooks, 1981, p. 7

Intersectionality is defined in this chapter as the intersection of singular identities such as race, class, and gender as they contribute to life experiences, particularly experiences of privilege and oppression (Collins, 2007; Greenwood, 2008; Gopaldas, 2013). The term “intersectionality” was first used by Crenshaw (1991) to describe how race and gender shaped the experiences of African-American women seeking employment; however the broader concept of intersectionality derived from twentieth century Black Feminist scholars who believed their interests were not represented in Black movements or Women’s movements in the United States (U.S.). Therefore, the use of intersectionality as a theoretical framework and research paradigm is most appropriate when examining the specific needs of African-American women pursuing doctoral study in counselor education programs.

When supporting African-American women doctoral students, counselor educators should recognize every aspect of their identity, and be especially aware of how multiple marginalized identities can influence their academic experiences. Using the theoretical lens of intersectionality, the understanding that multiple identities together affect a person’s lived experiences, counselor educators are called upon to discontinue an essentialist framework of viewing identity as singular and separate identities, and to begin viewing identity from within the context of a person’s culture. The act of recognizing that multiple experiences exist within various social identities is called cultural identity awareness, and cultural identity refers to an individual’s membership to various social groups (Coleman, Norton, Miranda, & McCubbin, 2003). For example, the term African-American refers to an individual’s cultural identity and membership to a specified racial group, whereas cultural identity awareness recognizes that the

experiences of one African-American is not necessarily a complete representation of the experiences of all African-American persons.

Moving from Singular Identity to Cultural Identity Awareness

Counselor educators can promote social justice through culture identity awareness by respecting student voice, understanding how each student constructs meaning from family and life experiences, and encouraging empowerment-over-treatment approach to counseling and learning (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Cultural identity awareness can also be promoted within counselor education programs, specifically within multicultural counseling courses. Multicultural counseling courses in counselor education programs incorporate the importance of culturally competent counselors, specifically as they are described in the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) developed by Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, and Sandler (1996). The purpose of the MCC is to increase counselors' level of cultural awareness so that they may implement culturally appropriate interventions for clients and students. Therefore, cultural identity awareness is the foundation of the MCC competencies which offers guidance to counselors of how to recognize the cultural influences in the lives of clients and students. Multicultural counseling courses typically focus on marginalized groups that have singular characteristics ascribed to them, such as race, gender, sexuality, or persons with a disability. Many counselor educators teaching multicultural counseling courses attempt to educate students about access to privileges or a lack thereof, but do so by categorizing and defining people by the singular group to which they belong (Coleman, Norton, Miranda, & McCubbin, 2003). Multicultural counseling courses also tend to place a higher emphasis on racial grouping in comparison to other marginalized groups, such as gender, sexual orientation, and persons with disability, and center class discussions around racial experiences related to racism and pride in

one's racial group membership (Coleman et al., 2003). How one's racial group membership is influenced by gender is often overlooked, and as a result never fully capture the experiences of women of color. Therefore, an intersectional approach to training and supporting doctoral students through cultural identity awareness is needed to counter the challenges facing African-American women doctoral students today.

Recommendation for Counselor Educators

This chapter advocates that counselor education programs do not endorse an essentialist approach when supporting a diverse group of student populations, even when educating students about the beauty of diversity. Essentialism is the idea that all people who share a singular characteristic also share the same experiences (Coleman, Norton, Miranda, & McCubbin, 2003). Counseling departments that view minority students as a collective group or attempts to support minority students from a “one-fits-all” support plan fail to acknowledge the significance of individual differences, and how multiple marginalized identities can impact students’ experience during graduate study. Ultimately, essentializing diverse student populations through hegemonic conversation, for example, “Blackness” or “womanhood”, renders the experiences of marginal persons with intersecting identities invisible, and indirectly constructs a standard way of being a member of that group (Few-Demo, 2014). Coleman, Norton, Miranda, & McCubbin (2003) label the process of acknowledging people of varying racial groups from an essentialist viewpoint as “liberal racism”, stating that the very assumption that essential racial qualities could determine how members of a racial group will behave as terrifying. A true concept when you consider the foundations of stereotypes as steeped in false assumptions about a collective group. Therefore, counselor educators should be mindful in how they support diverse student populations as well as how they educate future counselor educators in becoming multiculturally competent. Teaching

multicultural competence from an essentialist approach is inappropriate and perpetuates stereotyping of cultural groups, and can be considered a promotion of “whiteness”. Promoting “whiteness” takes place when white culture becomes the standard way of operating within the graduate school setting, and white, middle class values are perceived as the appropriate ways of thinking and behaving in the classroom.

Counselor educators need to have a sound foundation for understanding how intersecting identities are carried out in the lives of their students, and that addressing the needs of diverse students from a singular-identity approach is ineffective. The foundational argument of this chapter is that counselor educators view their students holistically, and understand that students enter their classrooms confronting varying levels of privileges and oppressions that will either advance or impede their academic success. Therefore counselor educators are in a unique position to support this population of students, and are essential in providing a welcoming environment that encourages African-American female enrollment and degree attainment in counselor education programs.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW:

USING A WOMANIST THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT
WOMEN OF COLOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION
PROGRAMS:

A CALL TO THE FIELD OF COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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Abstract

There is a lack of research that acknowledges the importance of supporting women of color as a unique population of doctoral students in counseling education (Grant, 2012). Counselor educators are encouraged to move beyond traditional and essentialist approaches to support female doctoral students of color (Grant & Simmons, 2008). This chapter recognized multiple sources of disadvantage for women of color and used Womanism (Walker, 1983) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as theoretical lenses for providing support to women of color doctoral students in counselor education programs. The Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is introduced as a structural framework that used the tenets of Womanism (Walker, 1983) to build upon the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996), and provided counselor educators with a specific process towards supporting women of color doctoral students.

Keywords: Womanism, intersectionality, women of color, counselor education, doctoral students

Introduction

Counseling students are said to construct their knowledge about the counseling profession through supervision and their experiences in counseling programs (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006). Experiences in counseling programs can impact the professional and personal identity of emerging counselor educators. Therefore, a supportive environment is critical in the academic development of future counselor educators, specifically minority students who are more likely to experience academic and social barriers in graduate school settings (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). Academic and social barriers for persons of color in graduate school settings are typically a result of how university and college institutions are structured around Westernized, white middle class culture (Coleman, 2004). Women of color, in particular, are more likely to encounter academic and social barriers in graduate school settings due to their double minority status as women and as persons of color (Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, Pratt, & Jaddo, 2011).

Women of color, pursuing a doctoral degree in counselor education, are faced not only with the stress and challenges that one might expect to accompany the completion of an advanced degree, but they must endure the additional weight of navigating through racist and sexist terrain that have long been in place within academic institutions (Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013). Some of the challenges faced by women of color doctoral students can include feelings of isolation, tokenism, invisibility, and fear of being viewed as incompetent, and can contribute to substantial source of stress for this population (Perry, Pullen, & Oser, 2012). Understanding the academic experiences of women of color doctoral students from their unique perspective may provide insight into their future identity as counselor educators and leaders in higher education (Dollarhide, Gibson, & Moss, 2013).

Counselor education programs have a strong history of covering topics surrounding advocacy and social justice that highlight the perspectives of persons of color (Steele, 2008); however, there are research studies that suggest counselor education programs are lacking an intersectional approach when supporting diverse students (Alderson, 2004; Evans & Barker, 2010; Grove & Blasby, 2009), and there continues to be a need to provide the perspectives of those historically made invisible (Warner & Shields, 2013). Women of color doctoral students are identified as one of the student populations made invisible in academic settings, even those that incorporate a multicultural and social justice framework, because this population encompasses multiple marginalized identities that are not always acknowledged as interconnected but apart from one another (Williams & Wiggins, 2010).

Multicultural counseling approaches within counselor education programs have tended to analyze cultural variables such as race and gender in isolation from one another rather than as overlapping identities (Bowman & King, 2003; Williams, 2005; Williams & Wiggins, 2010). This compartmentalization of race and gender into single identity categories limits the understanding of people with multiple marginalized identities (Williams & Wiggins, 2010). Failure to acknowledge the intersection of multiple marginalized identities and its impact on a doctoral students' graduate experience may result in the needs of women of color doctoral students in counselor education to be inadequately addressed, and, consequently, impacts the professional and personal identities of women of color as future counselor educators. Changes in the graduate school environment that benefit women of color doctoral students are also considered to benefit the graduate experiences for other doctoral students, regardless of race (Schwartz, Bower, Rice, & Washington, 2003).

The remainder of this chapter will emphasize the importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) when supporting women of color doctoral students by drawing attention to current literature that focuses on the experiences of students of color and women in higher education as separate groups. Literature that focuses on the specific experiences of women of color, while limited, is then further explored as well as the needs to support this population of students in higher education. The theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) and Womanism (Walker, 1983) are examined as contextually-appropriate support theoretical frameworks for women of color, and, finally, a support model that can be used by counselor educators to support women of color doctoral students is provided.

Literature Review

According to Brooks (2005), doctoral programs have largely been evaluated based on the reputation of faculty and numerical output of students that graduate from doctoral programs each year. This is certainly an important factor for perspective students interested in applying to a doctoral program, however, Morrison, Rudd, Zumeta, and Nerad (2011) recognize that the organization and design of a doctoral program, as well as the ability of faculty to meet the needs of their students can also be considered an equally important factor when evaluating the success of a doctoral program. In addition, attention should be paid to the qualitative measures that fall within the graduate experience between entrance and completion of the degree because student success in higher education is determined by an earned degree, not just admission (Schwartz, Bower, Rice, & Washington, 2003). The recruitment of women of color in doctoral programs alone is not enough, more emphasis should be placed on the environment in which a degree is earned, and a doctoral program should focus on increasing the number of minority students completing the degree to be considered truly successful (Schwartz et al., 2003).

Students of Color in Doctoral Programs

The progress to increase minority graduate enrollment and degree completion in higher education has been slow (Griffin, Muniz, & Espinosa, 2012). When looking at the large number of underrepresented minority students in graduate level education, specifically at the doctoral level, scholars and practitioners of higher education are strongly encouraged to evaluate all factors that contribute to a successful doctoral program for this student population. According to the National Science Foundation (2009), underrepresented minority students in the United States of America (U.S.), that fall within typical age ranges for graduate students (i.e. 25-40yrs), accounted for only 11.6% of doctoral degrees awarded in 2006. Recognizing these disheartening statistics reflect all persons of color within the U.S., the percentage for African-American doctoral students can be assumed to reflect a smaller percentage, and when looking specifically at African-American woman doctoral students the percentage of students earning a doctoral degree is assumed to be even smaller.

Some researchers have suggested an increase in minority graduate enrollment to diversify campuses (Alexander, 2010; Tapia, Lanius, & Alexander, 2003; Tieney, Campbell, & Sanchez, 2004). Griffin, Muniz, and Espinosa (2012) found that even with research that call for an increase in diversity across university campuses and also explain the benefits of a diverse campus upon student learning; state governments and policies as well as personal sentiments about diversity, including thoughts about affirmative action, have become challenges to providing a culturally-appropriate space for underrepresented groups. Therefore a closer look at the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the faculty and staff responsible for maintaining safe campuses and classrooms are suggested. As mentioned earlier, university and college institutions that are structured around Westernized, white middle class culture, which includes the attitudes,

thoughts, and beliefs associated with that culture, can further promote isolation as well as academic and social barriers for underrepresented groups (Coleman, 2004). Despite the increase of multicultural competence of graduate student faculty and students, there is a lack of evidence about the multicultural competence of preparation faculty (Pope & Mueller, 2005). According to Subramanian and Jaegar (2010), students from underrepresented groups are likely to seek academic programs that value their cultural perspectives and embody a faculty that can relate to their experiences.

Increasing minority students to campuses that are perceived as chilly or hostile to their presence in academic settings is not only counterproductive to their success as graduate students, but also invites them into potentially dangerous and emotionally-damaging situations. Therefore, graduate programs that wish to exemplify a social justice-oriented program that welcomes and supports students of underrepresented groups, should begin with recruiting a diverse faculty and staff (Kim & Sin, 2008), and encourage all faculty to employ a more comprehensive approach to pedagogical techniques (Umbach, 2006). These new approaches can be facilitated through faculty and student interactions, and infused into graduate curriculum that values the perspectives of diverse populations (Umbach, 2006).

Legal oppression has been the experience of African-Americans for a majority of their time in the United States of America (Marks & Reid, 2013). While integration of public schools has been legalized in the United States for more than fifty years, racism and subtle acts of prejudice, also known as microaggressions, are still prevalent in the United States and within higher education. Public schools are still lacking in educating a diverse society (Price-Dennis & Sauto-Manning, 2012) as indicated by the underrepresentation of African-American faculty (Pittman, 2012). According to the National Center for Education statistics (2009) African-

American faculty only represent 4.9% of full-time, tenure-track faculty, and most of these positions are of lower-ranked faculty status, 6.2% of assistant professors, 5.4% of associate professors, and 3.2% of full professors. Increasing the number of African-American students entering doctoral programs should begin by increasing the presence of faculty of color, specifically African-American faculty, and encouraging positive mentoring relationships with African-American students among all faculty that are dedicated towards the academic success of African-American doctoral students (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, Osborne-Lampkin, 2013).

Women in Doctoral Programs

Research on the attainment of post-secondary education across gender found that women earn more bachelor degrees than men, but continue to receive fewer early graduate and doctoral degrees than men (Perna, 2004). Women, however, are represented in greater proportions of doctoral degree attainment in the humanities and social sciences (Main, 2004), but this may be due to gender differences in graduate education experiences within male-dominated fields of science and engineering (Ferreira, 2003; Sallee, 2011). Main (2004) questioned whether the influence on doctoral progress for women was due to the lack of women faculty available to mentor and advise female doctoral students. The doctoral completion rate for women is recognized as slow and problematic by researchers who study graduate attrition rate (Lovitts, 2001; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Mahler, Ford, & Thompson, 2004). Factors that contribute to degree completion time include the availability of resources, level of support provided through faculty relationships, availability of research opportunities and professional development, and personal concerns related to family and health (Mahler, Ford, & Thompson, 2004). Anxiety may also contribute to degree completion time, women at the graduate level may experience fear of

inadequacy and being out-of place, and this anxiety may be compounded by the length of time between her undergraduate and graduate school career.

While the exclusion from higher education literature and the impact of the “glass ceiling” phenomenon have affected all women in academia, affirmative action policies are believed to have only benefited white women in higher education (Turner, 2002). Aside from the shared experience of gender discrimination, women of color doctoral students recognize that white women have fared and continue to fare better than women and men of color, and rarely anticipate support from their white female counterparts to reexamine academic programs founded on Western European ideals (Turner, 2002). Thompson and Loque (2005) found that African-American women in academia, in particular, encountered challenges from colleagues and administration, marginalization within their department, and professional jealousy. These experiences can be assumed to affect women of color doctoral students as well as women of color faculty. Therefore, there is a strong need to establish strong systems of support and mentoring relationships, such as affinity groups or organizations that focus specifically on training women of color doctoral students to navigate the academic terrain.

Mentoring Women of Color in Doctoral Programs

Affinity groups are safe spaces that allow students who share a similar identity to build connections and process painful moments experienced in academic settings (Parsons, 2012). Organizations that are designed to mentor and train women of color doctoral students for the barriers they may encounter in the academic setting should also be considered, for example the organization Sisters of The Academy (SOTA) Research Boot Camp as described in the Davis and Sutherland (2008) article “Expanding Access Through Doctoral Education: Perspectives from Two Participants of the Sisters of the Academy Research Boot Camp.” The goal of these

groups and organizations are to account for the experiences women of color encounter in the academic setting as double minorities. Unlike white doctoral students and men of color doctoral students, women of color doctoral students are likely to be overlooked as a specific group with a unique set of academic needs, and may continue to be underrepresented in doctoral degree completion studies as well as tenured faculty positions as a specific group.

Valuing what women of color doctoral students bring to the academic table means increasing the number of models and theoretical frameworks available to enhance the construction of knowledge surrounding their experiences in higher education which, as a result, can benefit the humanities and sciences within academia (Phillips & McCaskill, 1995). If counselor education programs truly want to provide a supportive atmosphere for future counselor educators that appeal to and support a diverse student body, these programs need to make certain their department and faculty adopt an approach that is more holistic, and supports students of multiple identities, like women of color doctoral students. Womanism (Walker, 1983) is used as a theoretical approach that supports women of color doctoral students and incorporates the complexity of multiple identities necessary to support a diverse student body for counselor educators.

Using the Theoretical Lenses of Intersectionality and Womanism to Support Women of Color Doctoral Students in Counselor Education Programs

Counselor educators desiring to build authentic relationships with women of color doctoral students should begin by gaining an understanding of how multiple identities, hereafter referred to as intersecting identities, can influence the lived experiences of women of color. Intersectionality, as credited to Kimberle Crenshaw (1996), defines how intersecting identities such as race, class, and gender contribute to life experiences, particularly experiences of

privilege and oppression (Bastia, 2014; Few-Demo, 2014; Gopaldas, 2013; Warner & Shields, 2013). Counselor educators can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity formation for women of color by learning more about the history of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996). Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) can be used as a framework or theory for counselor educators supporting women of color in doctoral programs (Warner & Shields, 2013). For instance, using intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a framework can be implemented as a strategy for studying identity, whereas using intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory, a research paradigm, can be used to understand a person's experiences as they relate to their intersecting identities (Warner & Shields, 2013). The use of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a framework or theory, however, may still not capture the unique and specific experiences among women of color doctoral students, and may require an additional theoretical lens that acknowledges the specific experiences within intersecting identity groups, such as African-American women, women living in poverty, women who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ), and women with disabilities. Therefore, this article proposes counselor educators use intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a general framework and theory for diverse student populations, but incorporate the theoretical lens of Womanism (Walker, 1983) to support women of color doctoral students.

Womanism, originally defined by Alice Walker in her 1983 novel, *In Search of My Mother's Gardens*, is suggested as a framework to explore multiple stigmatized identities, such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, which are recognized as interconnected, rather than isolated (Williams, 2005), in the lives of women of color doctoral students. Walker derived Womanism from the term "womanish", a form of black expression that mothers would use to describe their daughters, and refers to young women who attempt to act like older women or

behave in ways only considered appropriate for an adult woman (Walker, 1983). For the purposes of this article, Womanism (Walker, 1983) builds upon the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) by providing a specific framework necessary to analyze the lived experiences of women of color, and is considered an appropriate theoretical lens to support women of color doctoral students in counselor education.

Tenets of Womanism

In her book, *The Womanist Reader*, Phillips (2006) constructed five tenets of Womanism (Walker, 1983), based on Alice Walker's definition of the term, as a structural framework for understanding Womanism (Walker, 1983). She has since published a second text, under a different last name, that elaborates on the first in *The Womanist Idea* (2012). Each tenet, as described across both texts, will be explored for counselor educators who want to incorporate Womanism (Walker, 1983) as a theoretical approach to support women of color doctoral students. The five tenets of Womanism (Walker, 1983) include: Anti-Oppression, Vernacular, Non-Ideological, Communitarian, and Spirituality/Luxocracy (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006).

Anti-Oppression (Phillips, 2006), the first tenet, focuses on empowering individuals beyond socially constructed identities used to oppress and dominate marginalized groups (Phillips, 2006). This tenet should reinforce counselor educators who adhere to the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (1996) and are familiar with empowering individuals beyond their limitations through counselor awareness and the implementation of culturally appropriate intervention strategies (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Sanchez, Locke, Sanchez, & Stadler, 1996). This tenet serves to also remind counselor educators to remain self-reflective about one's biases and attitudes about varying populations of students to prevent reinforcing an oppressive atmosphere that ignores or creates barriers for women of color doctoral students. As mentioned

earlier, counselor educators should be aware that their department does not operate from a deficit model of diversity where faculty admit students of color into doctoral programs, but faculty attitudes about diversity prevent the development of positive relationships with students of color (Umbach, 2006).

The second tenet Vernacular (Phillips, 2006), is essentially described as “the everyday” where people are simply members of humankind with similar goals and desires (Phillips, 2006), and the core of humanity is not a divergence of those with and without privilege. This tenet simplifies the idea of humanity by recognizing everyone as collectively human with common interests. In order for counselor educators to genuinely support women of color doctoral students, counselor educators must recognize that by helping women of color doctoral students they help themselves as a community and as a people. Vernacular (Phillips, 2006) implies that social justice is not accomplished until everyone is allowed to be completely human (Phillips, 2006).

The third tenet of Womanism (Walker, 1983), Non-Ideological (Phillips, 2006), promotes inclusiveness and positive interrelationships by deconstructing “lines of demarcation” (Phillips, 2006), and recognizes the value of removing areas of demarcation and replacing these spaces with positive structures (Phillips, 2006). Demarcation is defined as that which is separated by distinct boundaries or an action that creates boundaries or limitations (Phillips, 2006). Counselor educators can use this tenet to observe areas of demarcation within their counseling programs to build positive relationships and a positive environment for women of color graduate students. Positive faculty and student relationships are an example of the Non-Ideological (Phillips, 2006). It is important for counselor educators to provide a welcoming and safe space for women of color doctoral students and present themselves as genuine, caring persons. This may involve

counselor educators being intentional in developing these relationships rather than expecting women of color doctoral students to approach them. These students, due to their multiple minority status, may be hesitant to approach counselor educators for fear of being seen as incompetent or lazy. Removing lines of demarcation between faculty and staff can foster positive interrelationships across faculty and student populations of intersecting identities.

Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) is the fourth tenet of Womanism (Walker, 1983) that acknowledges “commonweal as the goal of social change” (Phillips, 2006). Commonweal (Phillips, 2006) is defined as an intellectual understanding of how each individual contributes to the whole system through their choices, actions, thoughts and words, and how each decision impacts other people and their environment which inevitably impacts the individual again (Phillips, 2006). Maparyan (2012) uses Thich Nhat Hanh’s Interbeing and an African metaphysical principle to capture the essence of this tenet stating, “I am because We Are and We Are because I am.” This tenet characterizes social justice work for counselor educators and how their work with all students impacts their community and themselves. Therefore, it is important counselor educators not view supporting women of color doctoral students as an additional, isolated task or an attempt to serve this population alone, but recognize that by supporting women of color doctoral students through a Womanist framework supports the academic profession of counselor educators and, by extension, the social community as a whole.

The final tenet, Spirituality/Luxocracy (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006), asserts the interconnection of all natural creations which include, people, animals, plants, and other forms of life on Earth (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006). Spirituality is considered separate from religion in such a way that permits religious, nonreligious, and the spiritual but not religious, even atheists and agnostics, to be connected and engaged in common dialogue (Maparyan, 2012). In

her second novel, Phillips builds on the concept of Spirituality and adds Luxocracy, meaning “Rule of Light”, which involves harmonizing and coordinating with others to determine how to make separate elements work together while making positive relationships in ways that seemed impossible before (Maparayan, 2012). This tenet fits well into counselor education programs that promote multiculturalism and social justice into their graduate curriculum. Therefore counselor educators do not need to share the same religious affiliations and principles of their students in order to assist students of varying spiritual identities. The goal of this tenet for counselor educators is that faculty members be intentional in working together with women of color doctoral students despite personal differences, and are likely to discover connections, however small, that can contribute toward a positive relationship.

Enhancing Traditional Support Models with the Communitarian Model to Support Women of Color Doctoral Students

Despite the number of counselor education programs that incorporate a social justice framework into their graduate curriculum, pedagogical approaches and discussions used to build positive attitudes and critical thinking skills among counselor educators to advocate for social justice is limited (Steele, 2008). Supporting women of color doctoral students in counselor education programs is to advocate for social justice, and therefore a model that better accommodates the needs of women of color doctoral students is warranted. This chapter introduces a paradigm that differs from traditional methods of supporting students of color, which lack the recognition of how intersecting identities influence one’s academic experience, by offering a model that enhances existing models by incorporating a Womanist framework. The Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is presented as a social justice paradigm to better support women of color doctoral students in counselor education programs.

The philosophical framework of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model derives from Alice Walker's Womanism (1983), the theory of intersectionality as defined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1996), and the five tenets of Womanism constructed by Layli Phillips/Maparyan (2006, 2012). The term *communitarian*, as defined by Layli Phillips in *The Womanist Reader*, represents how Womanism (Walker, 1983; Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006) views commonweal, "a state of collective well-being", as the goal of social justice (Phillips, 2006). Considering the need to increase the understanding of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory and the unique needs of women of color doctoral students, the term *communitarian* is considered to fit best for this model. The structure of The Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is designed and organized based on Janee M. Steele's Liberation Model (2008) in "Preparing Counselors to Advocate for Social Justice: A Liberation Model."

The Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is an organized approach to be used by counselor educators to support women of color doctoral students, and is designed to assist counselor educators in effectively implementing this model across various counselor education programs, such as school counseling, community counseling, and mental health counseling (Steele, 2008). In addition, the aim is to provide predominantly white institutions with an inclusive model that values women of color doctoral students. Therefore, the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is believed to fill the supportive gap for women of color doctoral students in counselor education programs by acknowledging the intersection of race and gender from a person of color/woman perspective.

Recognizing how the intersection of race and gender impacts the lived experiences of women of color doctoral students is the foundation of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model, and provides a culturally-appropriate approach for counselor educators to understand how

women of color make sense of their world and their place within it. Therefore, the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) lies within the core of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model because intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory examines how multiple sources of women's oppression intersect (Crenshaw, 1996). The purpose of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) within the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is to assist counselor educators in conceptualizing the complexities of identity formation for women of color. Womanism (Walker, 1983) provides the structural framework that builds upon the theory of intersectionality, providing counselor educators with a specific process towards supporting women of color doctoral students, and therefore creates the Communitarian (Phillips, 1996) model.

Structure of the Communitarian Model

The purpose, content and process sections of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model are borrowed from the purpose, content and process sections of Steele's Liberation Model (2008) which provided counselor educators with an explanatory procedure for preparing future counselors to advocate for social justice. The purpose, content and process sections of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model also provide counselor educators with an explanatory procedure to effectively support women of color doctoral students and are aligned with the five tenets of Womanism (Phillips, 2006; Walker, 1983). The goal of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is to present a clear step-by-step procedure for counselor educators, which includes content and intervention strategies necessary to support women of color doctoral students. In addition, an example of the implementation of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is provided for counselor educators to improve comprehension.

The Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model (see Table 1, pg. 42) is a five-step paradigm aligned with each *tenet* of Womanism (Walker, 1983) as described by Phillips (2006) and

Maparyan (2012). The *purpose* associated with each of the five tenets describes the goals counselor educators should use to fulfill the objective for each specified tenet. The *content* describes the materials and counseling preparations necessary to meet the goal for that tenet, and the *process* describes the methods that should be used by counselor educators to support women of color doctoral students. A thorough description of the purpose and content of each step within the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is explained, as well as the process counselor educators should use to implement the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model within their counseling department.

Anti-Oppression

The first step in implementing the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model to support women of color doctoral students in counselor education programs begins with the first tenet of Womanism (Walker, 1983) which is Anti-Oppression (Phillips, 2006). Counselor educators can make tremendous steps in supporting women of color doctoral students by first analyzing their biases and perceptions of women of color in academia. This may involve acknowledging one's perceptions about female students who are married, have children, and how these other obligations may or may not impact their graduate experience. Unfortunately, social expectations for women and persons of color in the United States still operate from sexist and racist preconceptions. A counselor educator may believe that a woman's primary responsibility is to her family, and may have a woman of color doctoral student who is a single mom. Therefore, it is important the counselor educator acknowledge and address that perception, monitor the perception to ensure it does not hinder the support given to the student, but provide her with supportive resources so she can be academically successful.

These resources can be journal articles or other relevant materials that are aligned with the student's experience which may promote support and advice that may prevent a woman of color doctoral student from feeling alone in her graduate experience, and possibly inspired by those who have been in a similar situation and persevered. For example, if the student is a Latina doctoral student and a single mom, the counselor educator may provide her with articles and narratives focused on the experience of being a Latina college student in a predominantly white institution. In addition, the counselor educator can empower women of color doctoral students by developing positive relationships, encouraging women of color doctoral students to open up about feelings of anxiety in graduate school, and write self-affirming statements about their identities based on self-perceptions.

The process of the Anti-Oppression (Phillips, 2006) step within the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model involves the counselor educator collaborating with the woman of color doctoral student. The counselor educator provides the woman of color doctoral student with campus resources, such as student housing, child care programs for graduate students, and journal articles that are relevant to her experience. The counselor educator also helps the woman of color doctoral student explore and lists all potential anxieties, fears, and concerns related to her identity as a woman of color doctoral student in academia. Collaboration during this step is essential because the counselor educator's role in this process is to guide a woman of color doctoral student through this exploration of socially-constructed identities, so as to prevent the counselor educator from making assumptions that may influence how she sees herself as a successful doctoral student. The counselor educator can also use the student's list of fears and anxieties to empower the woman of color doctoral student by helping her detect underlying

systems of oppressions related to her identity, such as racism and sexism that may be sustaining her anxieties, fears, or concerns.

Vernacular

The second step in implementing the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model to support women of color doctoral students in counselor education, titled Vernacular (Phillips, 2006), involves counselor educators removing language or behavioral attributes that signify an elite status in relation to students. This does not mean disregarding one's position of authority and responsibilities one assumes as a counselor educator, but using one's leadership position to unify rather than polarize relationships between faculty and students. Women of color doctoral students are likely to encounter situations in academia, either with faculty or other doctoral students, which reinforce hierarchical systems of oppression related to race, class, and gender, and, as a result, may feel even more distanced by faculty who present as exclusive or superior. In Vernacular (Phillips, 2006), the purpose of the counselor educator will be to explore the commonalities among counselor educators and students as a means of advocating the importance of unity over division, and educate counseling professionals of the systemic practices that maintain division.

Counselor educators can support women of color doctoral students by finding common links that unify counselors and counselor educators as a network of professionals working towards a common goal that benefits all people rather than benefiting the masses and elites separately. Counselor educators can begin this process by coordinating department events with students, inviting students to participate in research opportunities, faculty and student retreats, and presenting collaboratively at professional conferences. According to Phillips (2006), Womanism (Maparayan, 2012; Phillips, 2006; Walker, 1983) regards power and resource

differentials as highly problematic because this leads to dehumanization of individuals and prevents collective well-being. Therefore, counselor educators must also be willing to enter the professional spaces of their students, such as public schools or community counseling centers, where the student can share the space of knowledge acquisition with the counselor educator.

Similarly to Anti-Oppression (Phillips, 2006), the process of the Vernacular (Phillips, 2006) step within the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model involves the counselor educator collaborating with women of color doctoral students, but also sharing the academic space through collaborative projects and entering their world of expertise as an engaged learner. The Vernacular (Phillips, 2006) step of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model values what women of color doctoral students have to bring to the academic table and counselor educators who assist women of color doctoral students through collaboration provide a supportive and welcoming atmosphere that allows them to be completely human.

Non-Ideological

Non-Ideological (Phillips, 2006), is the third step in implementing the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model to support women of color doctoral students in counseling education, and extends the Vernacular (Phillips, 2006) step, by encouraging counselor educators to be intentional in building positive relationships. The purpose of this step is to remove lines of demarcation between faculty and student populations, and create positive interrelationships that encourage inclusiveness across faculty and student populations of intersecting identities. As mentioned earlier, women of color doctoral students, due to their multiple minority status, may be hesitant to approach counselor educators for help for fear of being seen as incompetent or lazy. Therefore, counselor educators can be intentional in building positive relationships by creating a support team among counseling faculty and staff. Mentoring is recognized as a

significant aspect of the doctoral experience for women of color doctoral students (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). A diverse group of faculty and staff are recommended to reflect the population of counselor education students; as some research studies have indicated the benefits for doctoral students finding someone they identify with in the academic field (Behar-Horenstein, West-Olatunji, Moore, Houchen & Roberts, 2012; Grant, 2012).

Counselor education programs that already have student support teams in place, the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is recommended for counselor educators supporting women of color doctoral students. Therefore, counselor educators working with women of color doctoral students should become familiar with the tenets of Womanism (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006; Walker, 1983) and intersectionality as defined by Crenshaw (1996). Equally important, counselor educators should inform all women of color doctoral students of the existence of the support team, and their role and responsibilities to them as women of color doctoral students.

Communitarian

The fourth step in implementing the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is a reflection of the model itself, Communitarian (Phillips, 2006). The purpose of the fourth step, Communitarian (Phillips, 2006), reinforces the Womanist idea of commonweal that suggests every individual contributes to the social system through choices and actions which influences the structure of the social system, and the social system, in turn, impacts the individual (Maparayan, 2012; Walker, 1983). The fourth step of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model also involves giving voice to women of color doctoral students, and providing them an outlet to communicate their experiences in a safe space. Affinity groups are safe spaces that allow

students who share a similar identity to build connections and process painful moments experienced in academic settings (Parsons, 2012). Identity formation is often shaped from the outside based on how others perceive an individual, however, identity formation is also constructed internally (Parsons, 2012). As a result, women of color may struggle with internal and external feelings and how they relate those feelings to their reactions in the academic setting. Therefore, organizing an affinity group gives voice to women of color doctoral students, and provides additional support to women of color doctoral students to express those feelings in a safe setting.

Counselor educators serving as mentors or as part of a support team for women of color doctoral students are encouraged to develop affinity groups that meet the specific needs of this population. Counselor educators whose identity reflects the identities of affinity group student members is preferred, however, student members serve as the leaders of the group, so the identity of the counselor educator is not a major concern as long as the desire to support women of color doctoral students is genuine.

Spirituality/Luxocracy

The final step in implementing the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is Spirituality/Luxocracy (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006; Walker, 1983). Academic perspectives have typically avoided spiritual considerations when advocating for social justice or other forms of advocacy, and so this step should not be misunderstood as a promotion of religion in academia (Maparyan, 2012). Womanism (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006; Walker, 1983), however, is not guarded about the existence of spirituality though it has nothing to do with any given religion, practice, or belief. Spirituality/Luxocracy (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006), within the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model recognizes that in some form all human life and human

kind are connected, and that social justice activism is rooted in the spiritual belief of this connection that values all human life. The purpose of this step in the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is to encourage counselor educators to advocate for all doctoral students despite differences, so that every student, including women of color doctoral students, are provided with supportive structures that allow them to be academically successful in a safe and welcoming environment (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006).

In effort to build new and positive relationships, which welcome women of color doctoral students, counselor educators will want to explore a need within their department or community that takes an additional step towards providing a safe space for marginalized groups of students. These projects could include a conference or workshop, community service event, or a project related to poetry and creative writing that promotes self-expression. In line with the Vernacular (Phillips, 2006) step of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model, counselor educators are encouraged to seek input from women of color doctoral students in determining a student project that will connect them with other doctoral students in counseling education. Regardless of the project implemented, counselor educators should be sure the event incorporates teamwork and inclusiveness, and has a social justice-oriented focus, such as building unity to prevent division. Personal self-reflection is another important component of this final step because Spirituality/Luxocracy (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006), explores how natural creations, including people, are interconnected. Therefore, counselor educators will want to explore how they are connected to the advocacy of women of color doctoral students on a personal level, and how their efforts might connect with women of color doctoral students on an interpersonal level.

Case Vignette

A case vignette describing how counselor educators may apply the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model with women of color doctoral students in counselor education is provided to establish comprehension. The case vignette follows a counselor educator and how she implements the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model with her faculty members and doctoral students. Recognizing that every university setting is different, the case vignette is provided to enhance comprehension of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model, and so is not the only approach to its implementation across counseling programs. The vignette also demonstrates that the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is not a sequential model because each step is considered necessary to support women of color doctoral students in counselor education regardless of order.

Dr. Linda Maxwell, an African-American associate professor, decided to use the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model when one of her doctoral students Maria, a first-generation Latina doctoral student, informed her that she did not want to submit a proposal for an upcoming counseling conference because she feared people attending her session might not see her as a competent presenter or question her citizenship status in the United States. Dr. Maxwell offered Maria an opportunity to discuss her apprehensions in a safe setting, and scheduled a meeting that provided optimum time to support Maria's needs.

Anti-Oppression. *Prior to her meeting with Maria, Dr. Maxwell sought another faculty member, Dr. Anderson, in her department to engage in peer supervision every other week to monitor her work with Maria. As an African-American woman, Dr. Maxwell was familiar with the academic and social barriers of graduate school, but did not want to make assumptions that Maria's experiences were the same. In addition, Dr. Maxwell was unfamiliar with the culture of*

Latina-American women, and wanted to address any preconceived notions or biases with a faculty member she trusted. In addition to scheduling bi-weekly supervision sessions with Dr. Anderson, Dr. Maxwell also began increasing her knowledge of Latina graduate experiences in academia, Womanist theory, and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory.

During her first meeting with Maria, Dr. Maxwell begins by listening to Maria's concerns about presenting at an upcoming conference. Using markers and a piece of chart paper, Dr. Maxwell asks Maria to list her anxieties or concerns that she spoke about and to be honest about those concerns. Dr. Maxwell will use this list to collaborate with Maria by exploring underlying systems of oppression that sustain her anxieties. This may include Dr. Maxwell asking Maria to think of situations during her graduate school experience, or prior to her graduate school experience, where she felt a similar anxiety of being perceived as incompetent, and how these situations may have been rooted in social perceptions of race and gender. Dr. Maxwell will then begin to use strategies to empower Maria by helping her deconstruct socially-constructed perceptions that have been used to make her feel incompetent as a Latina doctoral student. One of these strategies may include providing Maria with articles by women of color graduate students, preferably authored by Latina graduate students, to inform Maria how sexism and racism in academic institutions influence the academic experiences of women of color pursuing an advanced degree. Another strategy Dr. Maxwell may use to empower Maria beyond socially-constructed identities that have negatively impacted her self-esteem as a doctoral student, is to have Maria cross out each item she previously listed related to her anxieties and fears, and have Maria replace with a self-affirming statement that counters her previous one, such as "I am a competent Latina doctoral student."

This is an example of the first step in the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model: Anti-Oppression (Phillips, 2006). The goal of this meeting is to build a positive and supportive relationship, deconstruct oppressive thinking, and empower women of color doctoral students to see the best in themselves and promote self-actualization, wellness, and self-care (Phillips, 2006). Womanism (Walker, 1983) recognizes self-actualization as a foundation for positive social change, and acknowledges how women of color must attain anti-oppressive self-knowledge to prevent oppressive structures from limiting self-actualization (Maparyan, 2012). The incorporation of counseling articles by Dr. Maxwell promotes an anti-oppressive self-knowledge by allowing Maria to identify her anxieties with the anxieties of other women of color doctoral students as well as potential means of support and empowerment.

Vernacular. *Continuing in her bi-weekly peer supervision with Dr. Anderson, Dr. Maxwell employs the second step of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model, by requesting her counseling department take a more active stance in supporting women of color doctoral students at a faculty meeting. Dr. Maxwell uses the barriers facing Latina doctoral students in their department, with Maria's permission, to reveal a gap within the department that needs to be addressed to adequately support this population. Dr. Maxwell may share the tenets of Womanism (Walker, 1983) and the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) to educate faculty and staff on the issues facing women of color doctoral students.*

Dr. Maxwell continues the second step of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model by advocating on behalf of Maria to a larger audience. Dr. Maxwell decides to write a book chapter that advocates on behalf of Latina doctoral students, and invites Maria to be a contributor to the book. Dr. Maxwell guides her book in three areas: the commonalities within humanity, the importance of understanding how polarity between the masses and elites of society create

division, and the use of Womanism (Walker, 1983) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory to support women of color doctoral students. In addition, Dr. Maxwell visits Maria in her professional setting as a school counselor to learn how Maria assists marginalized students at the middle school level. Dr. Maxwell and Maria co-author their experiences of supporting students of intersecting identities across P-16 educational settings, and how the impact of these experiences will inform their future work as social change agents. Their book emphasizes that the counseling education profession cannot claim to provide safe and unprejudiced counseling education programs unless every student, including a woman of color doctoral student, is allowed to be successful within that institution.

This is an example of a counselor educator carrying out the second step of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model titled Vernacular (Phillips, 2006). This step is essential in educating on behalf of women of color doctoral students because supporting women of color doctoral students may not be enough if the attitudes of faculty and staff who contribute to an oppressive academic structure are not addressed. Counselor educators may also want to encourage faculty and student retreats to remove division and build supportive relationships outside the classroom. Counselor educators will also need to encourage faculty members to include women of color doctoral students in their conference and research projects while also being intentional in reaching out to support these students.

Non-ideological. *Building on the second step within the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model, Vernacular (Phillips, 2006), which advocates on behalf of women of color doctoral students, Dr. Maxwell invites faculty and staff to join a support team designed to advocate for women of color doctoral students in their counseling department. These team members are made up of a diverse group of faculty members, and are expected to be familiar with the tenets of*

Womanism (Phillips, 2006; Walker, 1983) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory when attending to issues facing women of color doctoral students. Recognizing areas of demarcation is an essential responsibility of the support team for women of color doctoral students, such as access to academic resources or persons, physical locations, or events that are inaccessible to women of color doctoral students. In addition, Dr. Maxwell informs Maria, and other women of color doctoral students that the support team exists to meet their specific needs while pursuing graduate study. Dr. Marisa Bahena, who is a Latina faculty member, joins the support group, and becomes an additional support system for Maria, and may be able to relate to the issues facing Maria who is also Latina pursuing doctoral study.

This is an example of a counselor educator carrying out the Non-Ideological (Phillips, 2006) step of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model. The use of a support team not only benefits women of color doctoral students, but counselor educators wishing to support this population and want to prevent burn-out. Having additional support for counselor educators will greatly benefit women of color doctoral students who will have access to more than one faculty member when seeking support. A diverse support team of faculty members is also recommended, and increases the opportunity for women of color doctoral students to receive support from a faculty member similar to their identity.

Communitarian. *Dr. Maxwell, through collaboration of the support team and women of color doctoral students, initiates the fourth step Communitarian, by organizing an affinity group for Latina doctoral students through which Maria can obtain a positive atmosphere of peer support, and may meet with Maria prior to the first affinity group meeting to discuss her inhibitions about presenting at an upcoming conference. Dr. Maxwell encourages Maria to share her fear of being perceived as incompetent and as an undocumented citizen with her*

affinity group members for support. Dr. Maxwell may also be able to support additional Latina doctoral students who may have similar fears by helping them communicate ways in which their identities as women and as Latinas have impacted their experience of pursuing doctoral study in counselor education. The affinity groups can last as long as group members need them and can always begin again if requested. Dr. Maxwell and Dr. Bahena are also a part of the affinity group; however, they inform group members that they will not serve as leaders of the discussions that take place during the group. Although Dr. Maxwell and Dr. Bahena may provide guidance or literature that would support the group as requested by group members, their role as instructors, members of the support team for women of color doctoral students, and as member of the affinity group for Latina doctoral students will be to support and advocate for needs of students in the group. Therefore, Maria and other group members may seek the advice of Dr. Maxwell and Dr. Bahena in regards to situations that have taken place in classes, and propose ways to improve the doctoral process that welcomes their input as women of color, specifically Latina doctoral students. Additional affinity groups that support other racial groups among women of color doctoral students are available including a general affinity group for women of color in higher education. The support team for women of color doctoral students is responsible for organizing affinity groups to meet the needs of this population.

This is an example of the fourth step within the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model. The focus of the fourth step is conveying the message that social change is the responsibility of every individual. Counselor educators are expected to serve as role models in this effort by advocating on behalf of women of color doctoral students through positions of leadership, mentoring, social justice-oriented research, and as affinity group members.

Spiritual/Luxocracy. *Dr. Maxwell recognized the need for all doctoral students to feel welcome and safe on campus, make friends of diverse backgrounds, and connect with people across different specializations of counseling. Outside of state, regional, and national conferences, Dr. Maxwell recognize this opportunity was rarely available for women of color doctoral students within their counseling department, and suggested the idea of hosting a student-led conference that emphasized the use of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory in counseling to departmental faculty. The intent of the conference is to allow all doctoral students across various specializations of counseling to work together, connect and build positive relationships with one another while organizing a conference that prioritizes intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory in counseling. All conference presentations will discuss incorporating an intersectional approach with diverse clients, research practices, and peer relationships on campus.*

Maria, who has received an increased level of support from the faculty support team and affinity group members over the past weeks, asks Dr. Maxwell if she can be a part of the student planning committee that will organize the departmental conference. Maria also informed Dr. Maxwell she submitted the proposal for the conference which she had anxiously told Dr. Maxwell about at the beginning of the semester, and stated that one of her affinity group members agreed to be a co-presenter to ease her anxiety about presenting. Dr. Maxwell welcomed her participation on the student planning committee for the departmental conference, and celebrated with Maria for submitting the proposal and obtaining a peer to support her professional development.

Dr. Maxwell continues to support Maria individually and during affinity group meetings, and continues to work on behalf of women of color doctoral students through the maintenance of

the support team, affinity groups, conference presentations, and research projects. Dr. Maxwell also continues in her peer supervision with Dr. Anderson and continues to encourage all doctoral students to work together towards a common goal. In regards to her departmental faculty members, Dr. Maxwell encourages them to advocate with and on behalf of women of color doctoral students while also continuing to be self-reflective about how advocacy influences the lives of their students and community as a whole.

Spirituality/Luxocracy (Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006), the fourth step in the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model, is conveyed through the counselor educator as she attempts to build positive and new relationships regardless of identity categorization, and focused on the importance of inclusiveness for all doctoral students to feel welcome and connected at their institution. The counselor educator in the case vignette also continues to participate in self-reflection to understand how her efforts contribute to her advocacy for women of color doctoral students.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to encourage counselor educators to move beyond traditional and essentialist approaches to support women of color doctoral students. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) is an important theory that should be embraced by counselor educators who want to support students with intersecting identities. Recognizing that intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory may be challenging to implement alone, Womanism (Walker, 1983) is recommended as a structural theoretical framework for supporting women of color doctoral students in counselor education. The Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model was provided to help counselor educators implement a structural approach towards supporting women of color doctoral students, and can be used to support specific women of color doctoral

students, for example African-American women. The benefit of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is its specificity, serving as a support structure that acknowledges how multiple sources of oppression for women of color doctoral students may negatively influence their academic experiences. Therefore, the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is considered an appropriate approach for women of color doctoral students in counselor education programs.

Counselor educators may encounter a few limitations in their implementation efforts of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model, the first includes supporting women of color doctoral students who may have a limited awareness of themselves as oppressed members of society. In these situations, the counselor educator should not suggest, make assumptions or claims about the students' identity, but listen respectfully to their concerns and maintain a supportive relationship. Womanism (Walker, 1983) emphasizes change and support through positive relationships (Maparyan, 2012). Another limitation involves counselor educators who may fear being ostracized or reprimanded by colleagues and department heads for challenging the current structure of the department through the use of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model. Recognizing that this may be a reality for some counselor educators, they are encouraged to use aspects of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model in personal student interactions and within the community. Counselor educators may also encounter a limitation involving the creation of the support team and affinity groups for women of color doctoral students, the counselor educator may be unable to locate faculty members who are willing to be a part of the support team or affinity groups due to other obligations, lack of availability, or simply do not support the idea. Again, counselor educators in these situations who would like to support women of color doctoral students are encouraged to use other aspects of the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006)

model, such as providing individual support as described in the first step: Anti-Oppression (Phillips, 2006).

Giving voice to women of color doctoral students through affinity groups, positive faculty relationships and supportive frameworks like the Communitarian (Phillips, 2006) model is a small but significant step towards promoting social change within higher education and advocating for women of color doctoral students in counselor education. Counselor educators who advocate on behalf of women of color doctoral students not only advocate for this population but also make a positive impact toward social justice for all.

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CHAPTER 3

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY EXPLORING THE INTERSECTING IDENTITIES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to understand how the intersecting identities of African-American women influence their experiences in counselor education programs. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) was introduced as a theoretical lens to acknowledge how intersecting identities play a significant role in the lived experiences of people with multiple identities, such as African-American women (Crenshaw, 1995). In an effort to capture the unique experiences of African-American women pursuing doctoral study in counselor education programs, Womanism (Walker, 1983) was used as an additional theoretical lens to build upon intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) by providing a structural framework to analyze their experiences in higher education.

Keywords: Womanism, intersectionality, African-American Women, Counselor Education

Introduction

The intersecting identities of African-American women are a unique and often overlooked set of experiences (Collins, 2007) that are rarely documented in counseling-related literature. This is especially true regarding the amount of literature focused specifically on the intersecting identities of African-American women pursuing doctoral study in counselor education programs. Having defied social limitations and systemic barriers that have historically marginalized African-American women from receiving an education, the African-American woman doctoral student is valuable to the academic setting (Helen, 2009). The American Psychological Association (APA) stated that women of color in the United States (U.S.) live in racist and patriarchal societies, and, as a result, are exposed to multiple forms of racism and sexism in a variety of settings such as academic institutions, interpersonal relationships, media and the workplace (2007). As women of color, African-American women doctoral students must contend with these burdens as well, while also being expected to perform at the same level as their white peers. Therefore, additional research focused on the systemic barriers and challenges that influence the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students is needed to assist counselor educators in providing support that acknowledges the intersectionality of race and gender.

Recognizing how institutional structures within higher education adhere to a Westernized, white middle class culture is an important factor to consider while exploring the experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs. Challenges that African-American women face at the doctoral level are likely to be systemic barriers that negatively affect their academic capabilities and professional development as future professionals (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne, 2013). Some challenges may include feelings

of invisibility due to a lack cultural representation on campus, poor mentoring, a fear of being perceived as incompetent, and having to disprove stereotypes associated with African-American women (Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013). These academic challenges experienced by African-American women pursuing doctoral study have not been well documented in research literature (Grant, 2012; Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). The same is true for the challenges of African-American women doctoral students in counseling-related literature, even with the increased focus of diversity and multiculturalism within counseling related research (Fassinger, 2013). This gap in the literature becomes evident when compared to the amount of counseling literature based on the experiences of African-American men and white women, thus minimizing the unique experiences of African-American women in the academic setting (Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, & Jaddo, 2011).

According to bell hooks (1981), black women are recognized as the only group in America to have their identity completely socialized out of existence, conversations about black persons typically focus on black men and conversations about women typically focus on white women. Similarly, African-American women's specific needs and experiences in academia may get minimized or overlooked altogether in graduate school settings due to the race-only or gender-only consciousness (Sule, 2014) of counselor educators. African-American women experience racism in ways that are not always similar to the experiences of African-American men, and they experience sexism in ways that are not always similar to the experiences of white women (Crenshaw, 1995). As a result, African-American women doctoral students may feel isolated in academic settings that do not acknowledge how the intersection of race and gender influence their lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1995; Harris, 2012). Therefore, this study takes an active stance in understanding how the intersecting identities of African-American women

influence their experiences in counselor education programs. For the purpose of this article, the terms “African-American women” and “Black women” are used interchangeably.

Literature Review

In the few studies that specifically examined the intersecting identities of African-American women in higher education, some authors have focused on the experiences of African-American women who have received doctoral degrees or currently serve in a faculty position (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Sule, 2014). According to these studies the number of African-American women receiving their doctorate from 1997 to 2007 increased from 60% to 66% of African-American women receiving their doctorate (Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013). African-American women were also reported to make up the largest faculty presence for women of color in the United States (U.S.) (Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, & Jaddo, 2011), however the number of African-American women holding leadership positions in higher education is significantly low (Alexander, 2010). According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, African-Americans held 211 leadership positions as college and university presidents in the United States (U.S.) in 2005; and 67 of those positions were held by African-American women. There is a growing body of literature related to higher education that calls for more female faculty of color, specifically for African-American women (Alexander, 2010; Bertrand-Jones et al., 2013; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Helen, 2009; Collins, 2007), however, there has been very little research conducted on the doctoral experiences of African-American women, specifically those in counselor education, that may influence graduation rate and attainment of faculty positions. As a result of limited research on the specific needs of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs, one can assume very little support

has been implemented to sustain this population throughout graduate study to ensure future success as counselor educators and leaders in higher education.

Underrepresentation of African-American Women Doctoral Students in Academic Literature

Considering the limited amount of research acknowledging the academic challenges of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education, support for this population may not only be minimal but inadequate because current research studies do not recognize intragroup differences when analyzing student populations (Bowman & King, 2003; Coleman, 2004; Crenshaw, 1995). Research studies that provide information regarding the experiences of African-American women in counselor education programs through umbrella terms like “persons of color” or “minority women” to describe their academic experiences as a collective group do a disservice to the support of African-American women doctoral students. When these studies neglect the intersection of race and gender while discussing the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students, the true needs of African-American women doctoral students remain hidden, and support structures that would meet their specific needs are unrecognized.

As an example, the ASHE Higher Education Report (2011) on *Examining Women's Status* highlighted degree attainment for all women in the U.S. from 2005 to 2010. When looking at postsecondary degree attainment for women across race in 2005, this report revealed that 39% of white women earned bachelor degrees compared to 18% of minority women, and 37% of white women earned master's degrees compared to 12% of minority women. The same report by the ASHE Higher Education Report (2011) revealed that in 2005 white women earned 33% of professional degrees compared to 13% of minority women. When examining leadership

positions for persons of color, as titled in the ASHE Higher Education Report (2011), women of color represent 19% of college and university presidents compared to 12% for men of color presidents.

Despite the disheartening academic and leadership gaps between white women and women of color, this report continues the legacy of inadequately representing African-American women's specific educational experience in literary studies through the use of umbrella term categories like "minority women" and "persons of color". As a result, statistical evidence that would identify specific areas of need to help African-American women in education fill this gap is lost in the data.

In addition to African-American women doctoral students being buried under data that do not accurately represent their specific academic experiences in counselor education, African-American women doctoral students, in fact all women of color doctoral students, can be systematically disadvantaged by researchers collecting information about women or African-American persons as separate groups. Research studies that examine aspects of a person's identity, such as race or gender, as distinct and separate categories, neglect the complex experiences of persons with intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1995), and inevitably promote an essentialist interpretation of an individual's experience (Coleman, Norton, Miranda, & McCubbin, 2003). An essentialist interpretation or essentialism is the idea that all people who share a singular characteristic also share the same lived experience (Coleman et al., 2003). Individuals who are unable to "fit in" to one singular identity may feel misrepresented when other aspects of their identity are minimized or ignored altogether (Bowman & King, 2003; Coleman et al., 2003). African-American women are caught between competing identities, and to

ally with either racial or gendered identities may mean suppressing a central component of their identity (Williams & Wiggins, 2010).

Burgess, Joseph, Ryn, & Carnes (2012) published an article exploring how stereotype threat affected women's performance in higher education. The authors define stereotype threat as "the process in which individuals who are members of a group characterized by negative stereotypes in a particular domain perform below their actual abilities in that domain when group membership is made salient" (Burgess et al., 2012). The study acknowledged a variety of academic traditions that promote gender stereotypes and prevent women from being successful in graduate school, and how graduate school settings may reinforce these stereotypes in overt and subtle forms. While women in the United States may share common experiences, including challenges related to gender in academia, recognition of how those experiences are connected to other forms of identity is essential.

Although this was a particularly insightful study, the term "woman" was never defined, and an explanation of how the intersection of race, class, or sexual identity combined with gender can influence one's educational experience was never mentioned. When the term "minority" was mentioned in the article, the authors referred to situations in which "women" found themselves numerically in the minority in relation to men. The authors of this study presented helpful evidence to expose sexist practices within higher education, however, by not acknowledging how other forms of identity influence one's performance in higher education fails to capture the true experience for all women suffering from stereotype threat. This is yet another example of how white women's experiences are consistently placed at the center of academic literature when issues related to gender are viewed as a singular identity, and the intersection of race and gender is absent. If African-American women doctoral students in counselor education

are subjected to essentialist approaches to research, their presence in the data as well as their specific needs to become successful counselor educators will continue to remain hidden under umbrella terms, like women of color or persons of color.

Examples of essentialism can be found in many research studies and published texts (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010), which are admirably focused on the needs and experiences of marginalized groups, but are nevertheless found guilty of generalizing their needs and experiences. These include: research titles geared toward solving the educational barriers of African-American students as a collective group, studies designed to prevent sexism in the workplace, and studies that attempt to help women of color attain a higher presence in leadership positions. Titles of published works such as, Carrell Horton's *The Black Doctorate*, George Oscar Ferguson, Jr.'s *The Psychology of the Negro*, and Mary Field Belenky's *Women's Ways of Knowing* are just a few popular examples of how the identities and unique experiences of African-American women have been hidden by the political agendas of men of color or white women in higher education. The criticism of these texts should not be misinterpreted as a failure to recognize their enormous contributions to academic literature and the field of education, previously dominated by white male scholars and researchers. The intention is to bring awareness of how race and gender essentialism in academic literature, specifically counseling literature, strategically leaves out the voices of African-American women, and how the need for an intersectional approach to recognize and support African-American women doctoral students is critical for their survival in higher education.

Theoretical Framework of Study

This study used a phenomenological methodological approach with the theoretical lenses of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) and Womanism (Walker, 1983) to understand how the

intersecting identities of African-American women doctoral students influenced their experiences in counselor education programs. There are a number of studies that have used intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) to explore the specific experiences of African-American women (Bastia, 2014; Gopaladas, 2013; Warner & Shields, 2013; Wilkins, 2012), as well as Womanism (Borum, 2006; DeBlaere & Bertsch, 2013; Walker, 1983; Williams, 2005; Williams & Wiggins, 2010), but no current studies have combined the lenses of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) and Womanism (Walker, 1983) as a methodological approach to understand the unique experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counseling education. Therefore this study aimed to build upon previous literature that advocates on behalf of African-American women and centers their experiences within counselor education programs.

Using Phenomenology to Understand the Intersecting Identities of African-American Women Doctoral Students

Phenomenology seeks to capture the essence of the lived experiences of people as they relate to a particular phenomena (Creswell, 2013) by focusing on the descriptions of what people experience, and how they experience what they experience (Patton, 2002). Essence is recognized in this study as an essential characteristic of an experience, and assumes participants' share some commonalities across human experiences even though each participants' view of that experience is unique to their specific lived experiences or life worlds (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In 1925 Edmund Husserl introduced phenomenology by emphasizing the importance of understanding an individual's subjective experience within specific life experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Smith, 2008), such as education, workplace, or interpersonal relationships. Phenomenological researchers are expected to participate in the process known as epoche or bracket, where all prior knowledge or biases about a phenomena are ignored and should not

influence one's understanding of another's experience (Hays & Singh, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Idhe, 2012). In fact, participants are considered co-researchers in the study being conducted due to their first-hand experience of the phenomena being explored (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Through a phenomenological approach, this study aimed to explore the direct experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs, and understand how their subjective experiences were influenced by the intersection of race and gender. When considering the lack of attention African-American women received in counseling-related literature, a phenomenological approach provided an appropriate foundation that valued the subjective experiences of African-American women and their socially constructed realities and truths. In line with a phenomenological research approach and an attempt to view participants' lived experiences from a fresh perspective, in-depth interview questions were developed to obtain a thick description of the participants' experiences (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006) and assessed participants' intentionality about those experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012). Finally, these experiences were respectfully be explored through the theoretical lenses of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) and Womanism (Walker, 1983) to understand the essence of the phenomenon being studied.

Using the Lenses of Intersectionality and Womanism with African-American Women Doctoral Students

The theoretical framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) emphasizes how African-American women's experiences are often overshadowed by research models that perceive race and gender as a component of identity that can be examined separately (Bastia, 2014; Gopaldas, 2013). Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) was used in this study to examine

how multiple sources of oppression intersected for African-American Women doctoral students (Bastia, 2014), and how the intersection of race and gender explained their academic experience in counselor education programs. The primary researcher believed intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) was a theoretical gateway into understanding the complexity of intersecting identities for all women of color, but would be difficult to implement in a research study. Therefore intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) was paired with Womanism (Walker, 1983) in effort to capture the specific experiences of African-American women in counselor education programs and as a theoretical lens for analyzing participant data.

Womanism, coined by Alice Walker, stems from the culture of African-American women and emphasizes the commitment to survival and wholeness of self (Walker, 1983; Williams, 2005), and has been used as a framework to explore multiple stigmatized identities, such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, which are recognized as interconnected, rather than isolated, in women's lives (Borum, 2006; DeBlaere & Bertsch, 2013; Williams, 2005; Williams & Wiggins, 2010). Womanism (Walker, 1983) is also considered a social change perspective that is rooted in African-American women's everyday experiences (Maparyan, 2012), and does not dissociate from feminism as evidenced by Walker's statement "Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender" (Walker, 1983). The use of Womanism (Walker, 1983) as a framework for this study gave African-American women pursuing doctoral study a theoretical model that not only acknowledged their unique experiences, but emphasized the historical combination of racism and sexism that has marked African-American women's struggle for equality since slavery (Borum, 2006). The use of Womanism (Walker, 1983) in this study sought not only to understand the specific experiences of African-American women and how their intersecting identities influenced their educational experiences, but centered the experiences of African-American women who

have been historically made invisible in the academic setting and within counseling literature (Grant, 2012).

The research question guiding the current study is: What are the experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs? This research question aimed to understand how the intersection of race and gender impacted the experiences of being in a counselor education doctoral program for African-American women. Therefore, this study's theoretical framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) and Womanism (Walker, 1983) was embedded within the research question. For example, the concept of intersectionality, as defined by Crenshaw (1996), suggests the general experiences of being in a counselor education doctoral program for African-American women will be directly influenced by their lived experiences as individuals with intersecting identities. Privileging the unique experiences of African-American women and acknowledging their lives as a multi-layered, within-group experience is in line with Womanism (Walker, 1983).

Method

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how the intersecting identities of African-American women influenced their experiences in counselor education programs. Using the research tradition of phenomenology, the aim was to determine what participants experience in counselor education programs, how they experienced being in counselor education programs, and the meanings participants associated with being in a counselor education program. From a phenomenological research approach, the primary researcher aimed to fully describe the individual and collective experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Hays & Singh, 2012). The data of phenomenology provided the primary researcher access to information that may go overlooked with traditional data analysis strategies.

Therefore, phenomenology provided a sensitive approach towards understanding the meaning and essence into participants' lifeworlds (Johnson & Christensen, 2012),

Phenomenology was an appropriate design for this study because the experiences of being in a counselor education doctoral program was conveyed from the participants' point of view, and as a result provided the primary researcher a window into their lifeworlds (Gallagher, 2012; Smith, 2008). When using a research tradition that centers the experiences of a specific group, the primary researcher is provided greater depth into understanding the meanings behind each individual's experience within the group and how each member relates to the phenomena under study (Idhe, 2012). Therefore, phenomenology supported the appropriateness of the research study and the research question by structuring the perceptions of participants through a variation method that explored a range of possible experiences (Idhe, 2012) as a doctoral student in a counselor education program.

Integrating Intersectionality and Womanism

In addition to the utilization of a phenomenological methodology that integrates a social justice lens, this study integrated the theoretical lenses of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) and Womanism (Walker, 1983). Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996), as mentioned earlier, acknowledges the importance of understanding how the intersection of race, gender, and class influence a person's lived experiences, and how the intersection of multiple oppressions should be explored as a collective experience rather than as separate issues (Bastia, 2014; Crenshaw, 1995; Gopaldas, 2013; Warner & Shields, 2012). Womanism (Walker, 1983) was also designed as a framework to acknowledge multiple stigmatized identities, such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, which are recognized as interconnected, rather than isolated, in women's lives (Williams, 2005). However, Womanism (Walker, 1983) builds upon the theory of

intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) by providing a specific framework necessary to analyze data. Emotional wellness, psychological strength, and resilience are considered core values that relate to network support and connection within Womanism (Maparyan, 2012; Walker, 1983; Williams, 2005), and provided a structural framework for interviewing participants. Due to this study's focus on providing support for women of color doctoral students in counselor education, these values were considered appropriate for understanding participant responses through a Womanist lens. Using a Womanist lens to collect and analyze data means privileging the voices and experiences of African-American women from a culturally-sensitive foundation (Borum, 2006) to capture the true academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs.

Researcher Positionality

The primary researcher is a thirty year old, African-American woman doctoral candidate completing her dissertation at a local university in the southeastern part of the United States (U. S.). The primary researcher served as the instrument for this study and was responsible for data collection and analysis. In accordance with Womanist researcher positionality, the researcher within a Womanist paradigm is an observer whose interpretations are shaped by political, cultural, and autobiographical stance (Borum, 2006). According to Xu and Storr (2012), one of the necessities of becoming a qualitative researcher is establishing a new way of thinking of what constitutes as evidence within a research study. In line with this new way of thinking, it is crucial that researchers exercise a culturally sensitive approach when collecting and analyzing data. In the past, research has been used to promote dominant values and norms, oppress marginalized groups, and blame persons for their victimization. Therefore the role of the researcher can be

considered a position of privilege that can be used to promote or deconstruct systemic oppression through data (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013).

The primary researcher recognized her dual position in this study as both researcher and group member of the population being studied. This may have likely influenced the process of epoche or bracketing while implementing phenomenological research. Therefore, the primary researcher participated in reflexive journaling throughout the duration of the study to reduce researcher bias by organizing her thoughts and opinions through writing. Researcher bias was monitored closely by the primary researcher given her personal and experiential knowledge surrounding the intersecting identities of African-American women. The primary researcher's sensitivity to the subject of the research study can be positive or negative towards the study's development (Hays & Singh, 2012). From a positive perspective, the research study may have gained an added level of depth within the findings because the primary researcher was potentially able to recognize subtle and complex situations among research participants, and given information by research participants not typically disclosed to outsiders due to her group membership status. From a negative perspective, the primary researcher may have overlooked key components within participant responses because of prior assumptions or expectations about the subject being discussed by the participants. The potential for this exchange between participants furthered the need for the primary researcher to work with her research team and adhere to the ethical codes as mandated by the American Counseling Association (ACA).

Research Team

The research team was composed of two other doctoral students who are currently pursuing a doctoral degree in counselor education, and are considered by the primary researcher to meet the academic qualifications necessary to fulfill their responsibilities as her research team.

The role of the research team was to assist the primary researcher in peer debriefing. Peer debriefing involves the research team working with the primary researcher by checking and interrogating the primary researcher's coding of transcriptions. The primary researcher was responsible for the development of the interview questions, and looking for codes, such as significant statements, words, or phrases from participant interview transcriptions (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The research team was also responsible for helping the primary researcher remain aware of any biases or other emotional reactions that may have influenced her interviews with participants or participant data. These strategies were believed to reduce researcher bias and promote trustworthiness of the study because the primary researcher served a dual role in this study both as researcher and member of the participant population. The research team met with the primary researcher once every two weeks in a confidential location to offer emotional support and guidance for the primary researcher throughout the duration of the study, as well as to provide their feedback from interview transcriptions.

One member of the research team was an African-American woman doctoral candidate who attended the same research institution as the primary researcher. She was considered an eligible member of the research team because she had experience observing significant words or phrases within transcriptions and employing a phenomenological approach to research. Therefore this research team member benefited the study by serving as a peer debriefer and her prior experiences of phenomenological work. The next research team member was a white woman doctoral candidate who also attended the same institution as the primary researcher. She was considered an eligible member of the research team because she also had experience in reading transcriptions and analyzing statements, words, or phrases for potential bias by the primary researcher. In addition, the primary researcher recognized the strength of the research

study could be enhanced by having a research team member who was not a member of the population being studied. The primary researcher considered alternative viewpoints of the transcriptions and meaningful dialogue among the research team enhanced the depth of the study overall. From a Womanist lens, understanding the experiences of African-American women is not exclusive to other African-American women. According to Alice Walker, in her book *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, she asserts that women across all races can learn from one another's shared experiences as women, mothers, and daughters (Walker, 1983).

Participants

Participants were chosen through purposeful and snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling involved selecting participants who met the criteria for participant selection. Snowball sampling involved the systematic process in which current participants provided the contact information of other possible participants to the primary researcher (Hays & Singh, 2012). The primary researcher, at this point, contacted these potential participants to see if they met the qualifications for the study, and continued the process of snowball sampling. Therefore, the primary researcher did not have a predetermined number of participants prior to the study.

Participants were eligible to take part in the study if they (a) racially identified as African-American/Black, (b) identified as women, and (c) were currently enrolled as a doctoral student in a counselor education program in the southeastern part of the United States (U.S.). The research requirements for the participants in this study were aligned with the focus of this study, and each participant acknowledged their qualifications prior to participation through the consent form sent by the primary researcher. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to understand how their intersecting identities as African-American women have influenced their experiences as doctoral students in counselor education programs.

From a phenomenological standpoint, a researcher aims to understand how one or more persons experience a phenomenon (Christensen & Johnson, 2012). Therefore generalizability through a large number of participants was not an intended goal of this study, and as a result the primary researcher sought participants who met the selection criteria of the study as available through purposive and snowball sampling.

Procedure

When the primary researcher received approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the primary researcher sought initial research study participants who met the study's participation criteria. Some of the initial participants were doctoral students who currently attended the same counselor education program as the primary researcher; however, additional participants were acquired based on eligibility requirements of the study and information provided from selected participants through snowball sampling. All selected participants had no prior knowledge about the study. Once their contact information was received, the primary researcher sent an email to potential participants introducing the primary researcher and her academic background, contact information, the purpose of the study, and the expectations of interested participants. The primary researcher also attached the IRB approval letter within the email to inform participants of the legality of the study, as well as a consent letter for interested participants to complete. Potential participants signed the consent letter and either mailed or emailed the signed copy back to the primary researcher's contact address, email or presented the consent letter to the primary researcher in person during their scheduled interview. Methods of communication were indicated both within the email and printed on the participant consent letter.

Once the primary researcher began to receive signed copies of participant consent letters, the primary researcher contacted each participant by the number or email address provided on the consent letter to set up a date for the first interview. When the interview date was scheduled, the primary researcher placed an additional call or email to participants a few days prior to the interview date to confirm the date, place, and time of the interview. The primary researcher originally planned to set each scheduled interview at least one week apart from the next interview to allow time for the primary researcher to transcribe the interview, organize the transcription through codes that were revealed in the data, and offer the participant an opportunity to review the themes created by the primary researcher and make any necessary changes to the transcription or primary researcher's codes. However, some interviews took place during the same week, but the primary researcher was able to transcribe interviews and send interpretations about the interview to the participant for participant review. Once participants had an opportunity to review the transcription they provided their acceptance or revisions of the transcriptions to the primary researcher by email. Once received, the primary researcher confirmed the participant-approved transcription and sent copies of the transcription to her research team. The primary researcher's research team played an active role in debriefing codes and the codebook created by the primary researcher, and searching for bias that may have influenced codes and themes developed from the transcription. The research team assisted the primary researcher in the development of larger themes that were discovered from coded transcriptions to gather insight into the essence of the transcriptions or participants' experiences. Once themes were identified they formed the basis for understanding the essence of African-American women doctoral students' experiences in counselor education programs.

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Developing deep questions to understand an individual's experience about a particular phenomenon, and in-depth interviewing to obtain a thick description of the experience are central to the phenomenological methodology (Jones, Torres, Arminio, 2006). Interview questions were developed in order to explore research questions within a phenomenological framework to gain insight into the lived experiences of participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) and through a Womanist lens (see Appendix B, pg. 145). Asking each participant to recall a specific experience she has had, carefully think about the experience, and explain the experience to the primary researcher was considered an effective strategy for prompting rich data from participants within a phenomenological framework (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Interview questions were created so they aligned with one of three Womanist values considered core components of Womanism (Walker, 1983), such as emotional wellness, psychological strength, and resilience (Maparyan, 2012). These three Womanist values served to inform interview questions that organized and structured participant responses through a Womanist framework. Interview questions about the participants' background were believed to provide a larger framework for understanding participant responses. For example, knowing whether the participant is a first generation doctoral student (background information) provided the primary researcher additional context for understanding the participant's responses on academic support (emotional wellness). Semi-structured interviews were conducted at random with participants who identified as African-American women in a counselor education program. In-person interviews were the preferred method of conducting interviews with participants; however, telephone interviews were a secondary option when a personal interviews could not be accomplished. In line with a Womanist approach to conducting interviews, in-person interviews

was selected as the preferred method of conducting participant interviews due to the sensitive and personal topic of the study (Borum, 2006).

The primary researcher used a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide founded by three core values that are essential to a Womanist framework, to elicit information from participants about how their intersecting identities as African-American women influenced their experiences in their current counseling education program. The same interview guide was used with every participant; however the direction of the interview was different for every participant as a result of their responses. The open-ended structure of the interview guide was designed to allow for new questions to arise based on participant responses to the fixed interview questions.

Each interview began with a brief description of the study similar to the information provided on the participant consent form (see Appendix A, pg. 142). Participants were informed that their identifiable information would be removed or disguised in the data, and that they had the option to discontinue participation in the study at any time. This includes a retraction of the information provided during the interview including the days after the interview has concluded up until publication. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes to seventy-five minutes. Participants were also given an opportunity at the end of each interview to express their personal thoughts as a contribution to the study. Upon completion of the interviews, participant personal identifiers were removed after the participant had an opportunity to review the interview transcription, and were replaced with new identifiers that disguised the identity of the participant.

Data Collection and Analysis

With regard to data collection and analysis, the primary researcher collected data through in-depth interview questions, based on three core values associated with support and connection within a Womanist framework (Maparyan, 2012; Walker, 1983), which were designed to elicit

information from participants that aligned with the purpose of this study. The primary researcher personally conducted interviews with participants by phone or in person. The primary researcher transcribed each interview in effort to re-examine the information presented from participant interviews, and develop meaningful codes by experiencing the interview a second time. Once participant data was collected and the interview had been transcribed, the primary researcher began the three step process of data analysis within phenomenological research which included bracketing, horizontalization, and the reduction of data into codes or meaningful units of data (Moustakas, 1994).

Bracketing or epoche, the first step in phenomenological data analysis, involved the primary researcher setting aside prior assumptions about the phenomenon being studied in order to view the phenomenon from the participant's view (Idhe, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Once prior assumptions and biases were acknowledged through the practice of reflexive journaling, described later, the primary researcher, through phenomenological reduction, revisited the data to look for significant statements within the transcriptions and derive the meaning and structure of each statement (Idhe, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). The second step of the phenomenological research process was horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994), where the primary researcher listed all of the significant statements apparent within each transcription, giving each statement equal value, and analyzing the meaning of each statement. In the final step of the data analysis process, the primary researcher reduced statements made by participants into specific codes that capture the essence of the phenomenon being studied (Hays & Singh, 2012). From the list of significant statements within each transcription, the primary researcher developed codes or meaning units that captured the essence of those statements, and determined if the same codes reoccurred in the

transcriptions of future participants. Through this method, the information participants provided within each interview guided the direction of the research, what codes were identified from transcriptions, and how the primary researcher developed a collective understanding of the essence of African-American women doctoral students' experiences in counselor education programs.

Significant statements were recognized in this study as a sentence, phrase, or a few sentences that specifically relate to the phenomenon being studied, and were aligned with a specific code that reflected a specific statements. Meaning units, similar to codes, were also developed by the primary researcher to describe the meanings of significant statements (Moustakas, 1994). The primary researcher maintained a codebook as a form of data collection and analysis to keep track of the use of codes as they relate to specific information conveyed by participants (see Appendix C, pg.147). The purpose of the codebook was to maintain an accurate use and replication of the same code or meaning unit to describe a specific piece of data (Hays & Singh; Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Completed transcriptions of the interviews, including the codes and meaning units created by the primary researcher of the participants' statements, were emailed to participants as a part of the member checking process. Through a Womanist lens, the researcher ensured the interpretations of the participant's information was shared with the participant and accurately reflected the participant's voice, and as a result welcomed participants' decisions to make changes to the transcriptions if they chose. Prioritizing the interpretations of the participants was a uniquely Womanist approach to research because it empowered participants to tell their story as they choose to be heard (Borum, 2006). Once the interpretations of the primary researcher were reviewed and accepted by participants, the primary researcher shared coded transcriptions

with her research team. The primary researcher and the research team looked within and across each transcription to search for similar codes and meaning units in effort to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied through constant comparison analysis and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). The constant comparison process took place at research team meetings, and involved comparing and contrasting the codes and meaning units in one transcription against the codes and meaning units in another to discover a collective essence of the participants' lifeworlds (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Imaginative variation involved the primary researcher and the research team viewing participant data from multiple perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). Each research team meetings compared only two transcriptions at a time, and each transcription was coded by the primary researcher and reviewed by the research team prior to the meeting so the data could be synthesized into larger themes.

The primary researcher and the research team continuously referred to the codebook developed by the primary researcher as they developed larger themes to ensure coded information matched the specific data aligned with each code. Larger themes that were discovered from codes and meaning units that represented significant statements by the participant, provided insight into participants' lifeworlds, related to research questions in this study, and were compiled into a larger description that represented the invariant structure or essence of the phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). The information presented in the larger composite description is presented in a later section titled, "Findings."

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of a study is a qualitative procedure used to increase the validity of a study through the truthfulness and cultural contextualization of the study's finding and conclusions (Hays & Singh, 2012). Strategies to build trustworthiness are essential in qualitative

studies that rely on the interpretation of the primary researcher about participant experiences. Strategies for trustworthiness in this study include a thorough review of the literature, the use of a codebook and research team, member checking, and reflexive journaling by the primary researcher. These strategies can also be linked to the process of reducing researcher bias.

In effort to build trustworthiness of the study, the primary researcher verified with her dissertation committee that a thorough and adequate literature review on the research tradition is conducted prior to the development of the study (Sinkovics & Alfodi, 2012). In effort to develop a strong theoretical foundation, the literature review significantly increased over the course of the research study from participant responses. By remaining informed of current literature that related to participant experiences was believed to contribute to the development of codes and themes that captured the unique experience of the participant. Therefore the essence of participants' experiences in counselor education programs was also informed by literature that supported those experiences.

The use of a research team was implemented during this study to assist the primary researcher in reviewing transcriptions, searching for themes, and reducing researcher bias by helping the primary researcher remain aware of personal thoughts and opinions during the study. Having a research team assist the primary researcher enhanced the trustworthiness of the study by reducing researcher bias since the researcher is also a member of the participant group being studied (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Therefore the research team was responsible for searching for bias within the creation of codes and the codebook developed by the primary researcher. The research team also benefited the study by recognizing components of the study that may have been overlooked by the primary researcher. The research team met with the primary researcher

once every two weeks in person or through various forms of telecommunication, (e.g. email, Skype).

Member checking was another method towards building trustworthiness of this study. Member checking allowed participants to review the primary researcher's interpretation of the interview, make changes or additions to accurately reflect their statements, and refer to components of the interview potentially misunderstood by the primary researcher (Sinkovics & Alfodi, 2012). Member checking was believed to reduce the lack of acknowledgement or portions of the interview that would have gone unnoticed by the primary researcher. The use of member checking enhanced the quality of the research study because it affirmed statements made by participants during the interview, so that the researcher can confidently interpret accurate information presented by the participant. Failure to capture accurate information in phenomenological research can greatly affect the quality of the data presented from the study. The primary researcher also paid close attention to the creation of interview questions to prevent leading and biased responses from research participants.

The final strategy incorporated into this study to build trustworthiness was reflexive journaling, sometimes referred to as an audit trail (Carcary, 2009). Reflexive journaling involved writing down personal experiences related to conducting the research from beginning to the completion of the study (Hays & Singh, 2012). The goal of this practice was to acknowledge emotions and thoughts that arose for the researcher that could potentially affect the research study (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Reflexive journaling was also a way to document feelings the researcher needed to acknowledge about herself as a form of self-reflection. This strategy was considered particularly valuable for the primary researcher because of her personal ties related to the group being studied.

Findings

This study explored the essence of how the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs are influenced by the intersection of race and gender. The individuals who participated in this study self-identified as African-American or Black as well as women. Participants also identified as currently enrolled doctoral students in a counselor education program in the U.S. Most participants identified being enrolled in a traditional, classroom-based doctoral program; however three participants identified as being enrolled in a hybrid doctoral program that included an online format. Hybrid doctoral programs involved mostly an online class format where students interacted with other students and instructors through a web-based virtual learning environment, and would also meet in person at a specified location determined by the university every six months. Therefore, students enrolled in a hybrid doctoral program may not live in the same geographic location as the university campus due to the online design of their doctoral program. For example, two of the research participants were enrolled in a hybrid counseling doctoral program where the university was built in Minnesota; however one participant physically resided in North Carolina and the other in Texas. The other research participant was enrolled in a hybrid doctoral program where the university was built in Atlanta, Georgia, but she physically resided in Savannah, Georgia. Nevertheless, the focus of this study was on understanding the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students enrolled in counselor education programs.

Purposive sampling was used to provide the researcher with a set of participants who met the above qualifications and could share their story as contribution to understanding the essence of African-American women doctoral students' experiences in counselor education programs. In addition, snowball sampling was used as a means to increase the number of African-American

women doctoral students necessary for the researcher to synthesize their experiences in counselor education programs and capture the “essence” of those experiences. The study was initially designed to invite participants from the Southeast U.S. Nevertheless participants’ geographic location came from various states across the country as a result of snowball sampling, online counselor education programs, and the research invitation being posted on a nation-wide list serve for counselor educators and graduate students of counselor education programs. African-American women doctoral students of online counselor education programs who responded to the research invitation posted to the nation-wide list serve did not reside near the physical campus of their university online program, and, foreseeably, recommended other participants within their online degree program who met the requirements of the study but also did not reside near the physical university campus. Therefore, some participants were enrolled in a counselor education program at a university located in the Southeast United States, but due to the online structure of their degree program the participants resided in another part of the country.

Additional specifics regarding study participants can be found in a table form as an appendix (Appendix D, pg. 149). Participants varied in terms of location, years completed in their doctoral programs (first year, second year, ABD), counseling backgrounds (school counseling, community counseling), occupation (school counselors, graduate assistants, veteran affairs counselor), and age (twenty-six to forty-nine). In addition, participants’ status as a first generation doctoral student, number of children, and family structure were diverse in nature.

The core components of Womanism (Walker, 1983), psychological strength, emotional wellness, and resiliency (Maparyan, 2012), served as the theoretical framework of data analysis, and were used to structure interview questions. As a result of the structured interview questions,

participant responses to the interview questions are believed to reflect each of the core components of Womanism (Walker, 1983), and by extension, the themes that were identified from the transcription of the participant interview are believed to also reflect the core components of Womanism (Walker, 1983). Therefore, the meaning units that contributed to the following themes are aligned with the core components of Womanism (Walker, 1983), psychological strength, emotional wellness, and resiliency (Maparyan, 2012), the theoretical framework of data analysis for this study.

Themes

Four overarching themes were developed from analysis of data through coding, horizontalization, and discussing the data. In line with a Womanist theoretical framework, the primary researcher identified four themes of African-American women doctoral experiences in counselor education programs through predominant statements made by research participants about those experiences: (a) “If I Do One Thing Wrong, I Represent All Black People”; (b) “Dang, There Are No Other Brown Female Faces?”; (c) “Having Support Makes A Difference Whether You Sink Or You Swim”; and (d) “Iron Sharpens Iron”. Also in line with a Womanist theoretical framework, emic titles are used for each theme to capture the essence of each participant’s lived experiences. Centering the voices and experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs was an important goal of this study, and the primary researcher believes the use of emic titles is in line with that goal.

Participants’ experiences of microaggressions within the academic setting comprised the first two themes, and are a reflection of the first core component of Womanism (Walker, 1983), psychological strength (Maparyan, 2012). Academic and social support that influenced participants’ academic experiences are reflected in the third theme, “Having Support Makes A

Difference Whether You Sink Or You Swim”, and are a reflection of the second core component of Womanism (Walker, 1983), emotional wellness (Maparyan, 2012). The last theme, “Iron Sharpens Iron”, is a reflection of the third core component of Womanism (Walker, 1983), resiliency (Maparyan, 2012), and describes the essence of participants’ academic experiences as they relate to responsibility to other African-American women doctoral students. Sub-themes were identified through the data analysis process. In the first theme, tokenism was identified as a sub-theme. In the second theme, outsider-within and space were identified as sub-themes. No sub-themes were found in the last two themes.

“If I Do One Thing Wrong, I Represent All Black People”

This theme focused on the experiences of African-American women doctoral students feeling pressured to be the “representative” for their racial group. Most participants acknowledged themselves as the only African-American or one of few African-American women in their cohort, and the social and academic pressures they experienced as a result of this isolation. Despite the increasing enrollment of African-American students in predominantly white institutions, there is research that suggest African-American students continue have inequitable experiences with faculty and in the classroom (Guiffreda & Douthit, 2010; McDowell, 2004; Seward, 2009). In addition, scholars (Negga, Applewhite, & Livingston, 2007; Neville, Heppner, Ji, & Thye, 2004) proposed African-American students attending predominantly white institutions experience greater levels of stress than their white peers as a result of alienation, social isolation, marginalization, and invisibility (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Wilkins & Lall, 2011). A statement made by Georgia Smith, a first year doctoral student, conveys the added level of stress and inequitable treatment she encountered in the academic setting as a racial minority:

They are surprised when they walk in the door and they see me. That's how I feel at the university. To prove what I could bring to the table for the university. I battle with that. I thought it was some type of internal oppression that I had myself.

This is a powerful testament to the inequitable experiences of marginalized groups in academia, and how Georgia Smith must contend not only with the challenges of pursuing doctoral study, but with the social and emotional stress of proving herself worthy of existing in the academic setting.

Many informants discussed the effects of feeling unrepresented in the academic setting and yet highly visible doctoral students from the viewpoint of a racial minority. As a result of this high visibility, there is pressure to represent oneself in a positive manner so as not to fit a presumed stereotype or negatively impact future African-American doctoral students. Another participant, Kim, described how she must be constantly aware of how she is perceived by other students in her cohort because she is African-American. Kim felt she must be careful in how she presents herself in the classroom setting because she will likely be perceived as aggressive or angry by her classmates:

I'm always feeling like I have to rehearse what I am going to say in advance or say it in a way where I'm not going to hurt somebody's feelings. I don't feel like other people have to do the same thing. For a black woman it's just different, and I don't get it. I just don't.

Inherent within this statement is the emotional stress and frustration felt by Kim who must combat negative stereotypes and fear in order to be accepted into the academic setting.

Interestingly, while discussing the burden of representing well for all black persons in the

academic setting, Renee, another participant, expressed her exhaustion of having to figure out how peers and faculty members perceive the way she represents herself in the academic setting. She acknowledged how she wished she could just accept difficult interactions with faculty and doctoral peers as a simple form of conflict, and not be burdened with wondering if other factors related to her identity as an African-American woman had in some way influenced that interaction:

What's difficult is when trying to navigate those tough situations and trying to figure out, 'What is this really about? Is it because I'm black or because I'm a black woman? That's a challenge. I don't think others have that experience.

Whereas I often have to step back and dissect it a little bit more. I'd just like to take it at face value and it not be about all this other stuff. But it might be about all this other stuff. I'm the only person in the room who stands out as different.

According to Renee, being a positive example of a black woman doctoral student did not prevent her from encountering situations where she still may have been associated with a negative stereotype by faculty and her doctoral peers. Though she may successfully combat the stereotypes associated with being a black woman in the academic setting, she recognized the possibility of still being perceived negatively as a black woman, and how this burden forces her to put energy into figuring out the reality of each situation.

Tokenism. Many research participants discussed feeling tokenized in the classroom setting, primarily because of their visibility as the only or one of few African-American students in their doctoral cohort or program. Tokenism is recognized as one of the challenges faced by women of color doctoral students, and can contribute to substantial source of stress for this population (Perry, Pullen, & Oser, 2012). Tokenism is defined as the experience of being

recognized and addressed as the representative for African-American women, and being expected to speak on behalf of every African-American and every African-American woman in an academic setting. This experience was considered a sub-theme since the research team agreed that the data from participants indicated that being tokenized was also about being “othered” in an academic setting. In this study, tokenism is considered an experience of various microaggressions within the academic setting, particularly when a person’s cultural background is perceived as different or less valued than the dominant culture, and as a result can lead to treating “the other” as a second-class citizen (Sue et al., 2007).

Communicated in many forms, such as a variety of verbal and non-verbal behavior, microaggressions are believed to be founded in stereotypes and hidden bias of others that consequently affect the victims of whom the stereotypes are about (Blume, Thyken, Lovato, & Denny, 2012). Microaggressions, as defined by Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Wills (1977), are the subtle, often automatic, non-verbal exchanges considered to be “put downs” for African-Americans by offenders. Sue et al. (2007) also defined racial microaggressions as events or situations that have an effect of offending people because of their race or ethnicity. Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solorzano (2009) identified three types of microaggressions, interpersonal microaggressions, racial jokes, and institutional microaggressions. Therefore the experience of being tokenized by others as the only African-American woman doctoral student in a predominantly white classroom is considered an interpersonal microaggression. The essence of research participants’ experiences as they relate to feeling tokenized is presented.

Tammy, the only African-American woman in her doctoral cohort in Akron, Ohio, talked about how she is given immediate attention whenever the topic of African-American persons come up in class, particularly in her multicultural class:

So it's like when you're the only one and everybody's looking towards you for answers for certain things. So say if we're in a multicultural class and talking about African-Americans, people sort of go to you for that, and sometimes you become the token, and it just kind of happens.

When African-American women doctoral students find themselves in the minority, there is an immense pressure not to be associated with the negative stereotypes portrayed by the media (Betrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). African-American women in education may feel they must dissociate from the negative stereotypes associated with African-American women to be taken seriously in academia (i.e. sapphires, jezebels, mammies, welfare queens, the angry black woman) (Austin, 1996; Fordham, 1993). Some of the challenges faced by women of color doctoral students can include feelings of fear of being viewed as incompetent, and can contribute to a substantial source of stress for this population (Perry, Pullen, & Oser, 2012). Due to this added weight of surviving in a doctoral program, African-American women doctoral students are in need of additional support to be successful and graduate from doctoral programs.

Isabella Rose, one of few African-American women in her doctoral cohort in Atlanta, Georgia, talked about the responsibility of making sure she made a good representation for other African-American doctoral students. She acknowledges the pressure of her visible status with faculty and students who will look to her as an example of the African-American women doctoral student in academic settings:

I have to be extra careful about what I do, what I say, how I present myself because I feel like I'm being watched. If I do one thing wrong, I represent all Black people.

A fear of failure also seemed to permeate the graduate experiences of research participants as a result of wanting to set a good example. Similar to Isabella Rose, Tammy also describes a desire to set a good example of African-American women doctoral students as a result of high visibility in a predominantly white, female academic setting.

I think just being an African-American woman and being the only one, you may feel the pressures of being the only one and wanting to do well. Just to be a good representative of that group.

Another participant, Alisha, discussed how she believed being a good representation as an African-American doctoral student will continue long after she graduates because of the limited number of African-American women with doctorates:

Wherever I go I just won't be Dr. Alisha. I think I'm going to be received as, 'There's that Dr. Alisha, the African-American lady.' Whatever I say, whatever I do it's going to represent...because I might be the only African-American woman they've met. So it's like a huge responsibility to be the example because if I'm the only one that they've met then that's why they feel that, 'Oh, African-American Ph.D.'s are like this,' even if we're not.

“Dang, there’s no other brown female faces?”

This theme focused on the experiences of African-American women doctoral students feeling isolated from their academic surroundings or existing as invisible members in a university setting. As mentioned earlier, Yosso et al. (2009) described institutional microaggressions as experiencing or observing an absence of people of color within various settings, and as a result may leave students of color feeling unwelcome or devalued. In addition to being highly visible in an academic setting as a result of one's racial identity, many

participants discussed what the graduate experience has been like for them as members of the doctoral program, but not a reflection of who their doctoral programs represent through faculty members and the culture of the academic institution. African-American women seeking a doctoral education may find themselves isolated in their academic pursuits, having to combat stereotypes strategically designed to prevent their success, and navigating the academic culture and unwritten rules of graduate school that are aligned with those in power (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Sule, 2014). In addition, African-American women in counselor education programs may attain an outsider-within status during graduate study, especially in predominantly White institutions, and can lead to an alienating experience in the academic setting (Harris, 2012).

Outsider-within. Many participants indicated their shock and disbelief when they discovered the statistical representation of African-American women who received their doctorates. Women of color doctoral students are identified as one of the student populations made invisible in academic settings, even those that incorporate a multicultural and social justice framework, because this population encompasses multiple marginalized identities that are not always acknowledged as interconnected but apart from one another (Williams & Wiggins, 2010). Outsider-Within is recognized as a form of identity, and form of microaggression, when an individual feels isolated as a result of a lack of individuals who look like them or when there is a lack of representation in course material that represent their identity group (Sue et al, 2007). Many participants talked about their academic experiences from the viewpoint of being the only African-American in their academic setting, how they perceived the limited diversity on their college campuses, and how they in turn were perceived as an obvious minority within a predominantly white institution.

Renee, a third year doctoral candidate, provides an example of the frustrations she feels while pursuing her doctorate at a predominantly white university in Virginia:

If I'm in a meeting with faculty or if I'm in a classroom, I'm the only person in the room who stands out as different. Like one thing is not like the other, right? I'm like, 'Dang, there's no other brown faces? There's no other brown female faces?'

Kim, a first year doctoral student, discusses how she feels like an outsider because of the lack of a diverse curriculum and has a difficult time connecting with course material that reflect the cultural agendas of the majority group responsible for developing the curriculum:

It is frustrating when we are asked to read a lot of stuff that I don't feel like applies to me. [They're] talking about racial identity and white privilege. I mean I don't want to read that, I am not white, but I have to. So my thing is why don't we see more of that coming from African-American women. So for me the connection is...that's a part of me being here.

In regards to the intersection of race and gender, participants' descriptions of feeling like an outsider-within came again through a racial identity lens because most participants acknowledged being the only African-American or one of a few women of color in their cohort. Terry, a second year doctoral student, describes a unique experience of feeling like an outsider-within at her university even with the presence of two African-American women faculty in her program. She describes the disappointment she experienced after discovering the few faculty of color present in her program as inaccessible to her needs as the only African-American female doctoral student:

Unfortunately, and it was very unfortunate that the two African-American women that I had as faculty members. One of them I think she was just totally embraced in climbing the ladder that she was just disconnected. The other African-American woman she was pretty much focused on finding another college...which she did. I don't think she could really reach or you know, well she probably knew all the inner workings, but her focus of trying to mentor wasn't there.

Casey, a doctoral candidate who also works as a graduate assistant at the same institution, relates to the frustrations expressed by Renee, but acknowledges that in addition to being isolated on campus that there is an additional cultural expectation of her as an African-American women doctoral student on a predominantly white campus that furthers her isolation.

I've worked in student affairs and they think or maybe it's the institution I work at too, it's very know you're role, don't push past, shut the heck up, and, you know, we let you here. Sit down, and be happy you're here.

Space. Space is recognized as a social barrier faced by African-American women doctoral students when other students, specifically white students, prohibit African-American women doctoral students from claiming equal space to participate in the academic setting. In addition, to the lack of representation on predominantly white campuses, many participants acknowledged encounters of resistance when attempting to make a space for themselves within the academic environment. Participants acknowledged that these challenges came from other cohort members who were unwilling to listen to their experiences or quick to dismiss their perspective about academic events or meetings. Participants also expressed feelings that faculty members challenged their attempt to gain space in the academic profession by preventing them

from graduating, perceiving them as a challenge to their authority, and by simply being unavailable for questions about how to move forward in their doctoral careers.

Isabella Rose expressed her frustration with her professors whom she felt had intentionally prevented her from being successful because they feared her ability to share the academic space with her once she graduated:

I don't know if they prevent us from leaving because they don't want us to excel. I feel like there's a bit of selfishness there. I feel like there's this whole 'I am the epitome of what a counselor educator looks like, and I don't want one of my students, who is my subordinate, to come up and be on my equal footing'. I feel like there's a little fear with that. Because when I graduate with my Ph.D. I'm on the same level as you, and if I decide to become a professor, and I decide to devote my life to writing articles then where does that put you? For sharing the same space. Are you comfortable sharing the space or not? I don't understand what else there could be for not allowing black women to graduate other than that. This is supposed to be an educational institution and it's becoming jail! I feel like I'm an incarcerated black woman! Just another black woman in the system. A different kind of jail!

The frustration expressed by Isabella Rose is an excellent representation of the subtle barriers encountered by African-American women doctoral students at the academic level. Other participants expressed the same level of frustration related to their failed attempts to claim space within the academic environment, such as in conferences, institutional events, and encounters with faculty because they were perceived as threats or a problem. Casey, (fill in demographic

info) acknowledged how her attempts to enter dialogue with other professionals have been met with fear:

As an African-American woman it's hard to be strong without that whole, 'Oh, you're angry.' Because I've always considered myself a straight shooter and direct, but yet it scares some people.

Developing one's professional identity as a future counselor educator or leader in the counseling profession demands doctoral students engage in professional dialogue and personal interactions with others in the counseling profession. However, if a majority of the members within the counseling profession represent predominantly-white faces and perceive African-American women as a potential threat to the academic arena of counseling, African-American women doctoral students chances of entering the academic space is limited at best.

“Having Support Makes A Difference Whether You Sink Or You Swim”

This theme focused on the importance of African-American women doctoral students receiving support both within and outside academia as a means towards degree completion. Many participants acknowledged their academic and social support systems as they continued through the doctoral process to be heavily influenced by faculty members, family, friends, and the support of their work environment. Each participant acknowledged the importance of the level of support they received to their success in their doctoral programs. Where participants received their support was varied across age, relationship status, and location of degree program. Nevertheless, they each acknowledged their continued participation in the doctoral process as invariably connected to having someone to seek academic and emotional support, whether a faculty member, employer, cohort member, friend, or spouse. Toni discussed the support she

received from her cohort members, and how they were instrumental in building each other as future professionals:

At this stage, most of us are older and have families, and other commitments and full-time jobs. So we can all relate to each other. I mean when we feel like giving up there's somebody else that you can send an email to when they feel like giving up. So we support each other.

Isabella Rose, a doctoral candidate who disclosed that her expected graduation date was delayed due the lack of mentorship she received from her faculty advisor. Isabella Rose describes herself as a very determined, methodical, and avid doctoral student, but that despite all of these admirable traits, as a first-generation doctoral student, she was unable to navigate the doctoral process alone.

I was trying to get some help because I wanted to do well. As long as you point me in the right direction, and you tell me what to do. I'll do it. But if you don't give me anything, you're vague, and I can't get in touch with you. Then you can't expect me to be successful.

Isabella Rose's experiences, though not a positive one, speaks volumes about the importance of mentoring and support for African-American women doctoral students, even for doctoral students who may perceive themselves as over-achievers. Georgia Smith, who acknowledges a lack of support from certain family members, has found academic and emotional support through her doctoral program's affinity group for African-American graduate students. Georgia Smith, a first-year, first-generation doctoral student, has found the affinity group to be a place of support and connection among other African-American women doctoral students:

I love the affinity group. Because I feel like the more advanced students are reaching back for us like this, 'Like, we got you. 'Cause we're going to tell you the truth.' I appreciate that because this is all new to me.

Another participant, Tammy, describes how her faith has assisted her in overcoming the challenges of being in a doctoral program:

I think I've grown spiritually a lot. So that alone provides me a lot of support.

Being a Christian is very much important to me. Going to church on Sundays is kind of what I need to get me throughout the week.

Many of the participants described the level of the support they received, regardless of where the support came from, as a reminder of their responsibility to help others. The next theme focuses on the essence of that experience.

“Iron Sharpens Iron”

This theme focused on the unanimous interests of African-American women doctoral students desire to support other African-American women doctoral students by assisting them in the navigation process of higher education, helping them become academically successful, and continue the legacy of helping others. One-hundred percent of research participants spoke towards using their experience to allow future African-American women doctoral students a better graduate experience than they experienced during doctoral study, and using their skills and knowledge after graduation to advocate on behalf of women of color doctoral students. Some participants focused on advocating for women of color doctoral students with regards to the academic environment, and increasing sensitivity to the issues marginalized persons across faculty and students. Others focused on how they planned to use their access and privileges of becoming researchers to promote the importance of mentoring to support the needs of persons of

color in predominantly white institutions. Kay, in particular, seemed excited at the opportunity to join the field of scholars and researchers after her struggles as an African-American woman doctoral student to advocate for others:

This was always an inspiration of mine, and just to know that I'll be joining that field, able to contribute to literature with studies or research for our people, or other marginalized groups. It just gives me a great sense of pride and expectation to possibly be named among those. I look forward to some research for us by us.

Georgia Smith, a first generation doctoral student, describes how she already plans to encourage future African-American women to enter doctoral programs:

Oh it's been amazing. It's been amazing to a point where I can now go back and tell others what to expect. I can give suggestions on how to navigate because I didn't know how.

Alisha discussed the responsibility she felt in giving back to others as a result of her doctoral status, and described the responsibility not just toward African-American women doctoral students but the community at large:

Obtaining the level of Ph.D., I can't just sit back on the job, and it has to be about giving back. It has to be about educating. It has to be about pulling up others. Just building the community. I mean all of that. So, my she-roses, that's what they have done, and I hope to set in any small way, or anyway, lead that life.

The responses from the participants in this study are a reflection of their experiences individually, but are also a reflection of the essence of their experiences as a whole with regards to the intersection of race and gender on the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs.

Discussion

This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore how the intersecting identities of African-American women doctoral students influenced their experiences in counselor education programs. The primary researcher designed this study to uncover the unique and specific experiences of African-American women at the doctoral level. The findings of this exploratory study may provide insight to the lived experiences of African-American women doctoral students in academia that are not often revealed in current literature related to counselor education.

Through data analysis, the primary researcher and her research team discovered four themes (If I Do Anything Wrong I Represent All Black People, Dang, There Are No Other Brown Female Faces, Having Support Makes a Difference Whether You Sink or You Swim, and Iron Sharpens Iron) which intersected with preexisting literature about the challenges women of color encounter in higher education. Specifically preexisting literature focused on the importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995; Gopaldas, 2013; Sule, 2014), tokenism (Pena & Wilder, 2011), feelings of isolation (Evans-Winters, 2005; Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, Pratt, & Jaddo, 2011), combating negative images of black women (Collins, 2007; Harris, 2012; Helen, 2009), inability to see oneself among faculty (Alexander, 2010) and the need for mentorship (Bertrand Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013).

The academic experiences acknowledged by participants in the academic setting are all too often ignored as mere social challenges to be expected at the doctoral level, such as the pressure to be successful, fear of failure, or even a desire represent oneself in a positive light. However, these exact challenges as mentioned by participants have a uniqueness that are directly related to their racial identity as African-American doctoral students. Due to the high number of

women in their doctoral programs across student and faculty populations, most acknowledge their isolation was in relation to their racial identity. Therefore, the pressure to be successful and their fear of failure were heightened by their hyper-visibility as African-American doctoral students in a predominantly white setting. In addition, the desire to represent oneself in a positive light was less related to a selfish need to be seen favorably by peers, but to dissociate oneself from negative stereotypes about African-American women and prevent discrimination against future African-American women doctoral students. This is an immense burden to carry on top of all the expected challenges that are associated with attaining one's doctoral degree in general, and is likely overlooked by counselor educators within the counseling profession.

Recognizing that women across all race and ethnicities encompass more degrees in the helping professions than men (Main, 2004; Perna, 2004; Turner, 2002), the counseling profession remains a predominantly white profession that often lacks a multicultural perspective with regard to research and publications, and, as a result, much of the curriculum that is used to prepare future counselors reflect this lack of multiculturalism. In addition, many counseling programs reflect a physical student body that also portrays a lack of diversity which, unfortunately, may contribute to the cycle of research and publications that lack a multicultural perspective within the counseling profession. The responses from a majority of participants seemed to reflect the continuation of this cycle due to the lack of diversity on campuses, a lack of multicultural perspectives within course curriculum, and the perceived fear African-American women experienced in relation to other students and faculty. Therefore graduate programs that wish to exemplify a social justice-oriented program that welcomes and supports students of underrepresented groups, should begin with recruiting a diverse faculty and staff (Kim & Sin,

2008), and employ a more comprehensive approach towards educating its students (Umbach, 2006).

Participants expressed a desire to read course material applicable to their experiences or at least acknowledged their existence. The inability to see oneself reflected within curriculum, faculty presence, and on the physical campus may contribute to African-American women doctoral students feeling of isolated or question their ability to be successful within that specific environment. These combinations of microaggressions should be recognized as more than just expected challenges within a doctoral program, but acknowledged as an added challenge for persons with multiple marginalized identities. Recruiting African-American women doctoral students is not enough. If individuals within the academic setting do not welcome their presence or the environment itself reflect this attitude by catering to the needs of the majority student population, African-American women doctoral students are less likely to be successful during their enrollment, and their chances to graduate successfully from their doctoral programs is lessened. It is important, however, to view African-American women doctoral students not as victims or from a deficit perspective, but as survivors of an oppressive system designed to marginalize persons of color (Haskins, Whitfield-Williams, Shillingford, Singh, Moxley, & Ofauni, 2013).

Participants largely agreed that changes they would make in the academic field to support African-American women doctoral students would be to increase mentorship for these students. Concerns surrounding mentorship for African-American women doctoral students included the availability of faculty to support African-American women doctoral students in helping them reach their academic goals after graduation and including them on professional development collaboration projects. Most participants acknowledged positive mentoring as an essential

component to being successful in their doctoral programs, which is consistent with literature that call for more mentoring for African-American women doctoral students (Bertrand-Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). Students from underrepresented groups are likely to seek academic programs that value their cultural perspectives and embody faculty that can relate to their experiences (Subramanian & Jaegar, 2010).

Limitations of Study

The results of this study attempted to fill an important gap in counseling literature as it relates to the experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs. Yet, there are limitations of this study that may have influenced the interpretation of findings. The first limitation was that the primary researcher who conducted and served as the instrument for this study identified as an African-American woman doctoral student in counselor education, and, although she recognized bracketing her bias and engaging in epoche, the degree of influence of those biases cannot be determined. In addition, participants of the study shared three or more identities with the primary researcher who conducted all participant interviews (racial, gender, and academic). This included the primary researcher attending the same doctoral program as three of her participants. While the benefit of these similarities may have led participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences with the primary researcher, the disadvantaged is that these similarities may have affected the depth of responses by participants as they may have assumed the primary researcher understood certain situations without verbalizing it directly.

In reviewing the audit trail of the primary researcher, it was clearly acknowledged that the primary researcher became comfortable employing the use of the interview protocol and process overtime, and as a result the specificity of the primary researcher's questions became

more refined with each participant. In addition, each participant helped the researcher provide more clarity to questions in the interview protocol, word usage, and opportunities to for participants to provide additional information not asked of them on the interview protocol.

Implications for Future Research, Practice, and Advocacy

The goal of this study was to provide an opportunity to African-American women doctoral students to talk about their experiences as African-Americans and as women, and how these identities have impacted their experiences in the academic setting. Findings indicated that this study did provide much needed insight into the subtle negative experiences, microaggressions, African-American women doctoral students experienced in the academic setting. This study also acknowledged the importance of incorporating support for African-American women doctoral students, and how levels of support can determine the success and graduation of these students. There is a crucial need for mentorship of women of color doctoral students, specifically African-American women doctoral students, and how important mentorship can be in providing a safe space for marginalized groups and for successful completion of a doctoral program. In order to gain a clearer understanding about the experiences of African-American women doctoral students as a unique and separate group, more research is needed to explore other contributing factors that were only mentioned by participants in this study. Additional research may better inform counselor educators in their practice and advocacy efforts on behalf of African-American women doctoral students.

Conclusion

This study revealed that participants endure academic challenges beyond the expected challenges associated with attaining a doctoral degree, such as isolation, tokenism, and pressure to perform well as member of a minority group. These challenges were acknowledged by

participants as being directly connected to their multiple marginalized identities as African-American women. Various forms of support were also acknowledged by participants as a means of combating systemic challenges in academia, such as friends, family, and their faith, but many of their sources for support came from outside the academic setting. Lack of support for their needs may also contribute to the overall interests among participants to advocate for future African-American women entering doctoral programs or academia at any level through their future research or career interests.

Participants in this study discussed their personal and professional experiences as African-American women pursuing doctoral study in counselor education. Their experiences, uplifting and painful, reveal the necessity to explore the importance of having an intersectional approach when working with diverse students. Acknowledging the experiences of African-American women by race-only or gender-only lenses, ignores the entirety of their lived experiences as members of at least two marginalized groups that in many ways compound upon the other in social and professional settings. Therefore, counselor educators should look deeper into how they advocate for marginalized groups of students, and ensure that other salient components of their identity do not go overlooked.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION: A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON RESEARCH CONDUCTED WITH AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This chapter is a reflection of the primary researcher's development as a social justice researcher and of the qualitative research process overall. The researcher uses personal accounts from reflective journals and dialogues with her research team to acknowledge the success and challenges experienced through the research process. The researcher described the use of a phenomenological approach towards understanding the essence of the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students, and how incorporating the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) and Womanism (Walker, 1983) informed her interaction with research participants. In particular, the researcher discusses insights that were developed from her conversations with research participants, and how these conversations solidified her future work as a social justice researcher and scholar.

This introspective account of research conducted with African-American women doctoral students is a deep reflection of my development as a researcher and of the research process overall. This reflection is primarily based on information from reflective journals and dialogue with my research team about my overall development as a primary researcher. By acknowledging aspects of my reflexivity, I explored how my personal experiences and researcher positionality may have influenced each phase of the research process. Researcher reflexivity has been my primary method of acknowledging feelings and biases related to my

study throughout the entire research process. Engaging in the phenomenological approach of epoche, I critically examined my assumptions, values, past experiences, and personal connection and interest related to this topic, and immersed myself in continuous self-analysis throughout each phase of the study (Moustakas, 1994). Continued self-analysis allowed me to minimize judgment and influence of personal assumptions on the interpretation of data (Idhe, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). As a member of the population examined in my study, I considered an exploration of my personal experiences, including the interactions with my research participants, beneficial to reflect in writing. I also felt this exploration could serve as an added point of trustworthiness by acknowledging the influence I inevitably contributed as the instrument for my study (Williams & Morrow, 2009).

As a social justice advocate, my primary goal was to provide an outlet for African-American women doctoral students to discuss their academic experiences in counselor education, and convey how those experiences were uniquely tied to their identities of race and gender. My reflections as the primary researcher for this study have provided a greater sense of depth in understanding my strengths and weaknesses in conducting research. These personal reflections have also provided an opportunity to enhance my skills and knowledge for conducting future research. As a result, the development of this study has allowed me to be fully aware of how my privilege as a researcher, the successes and challenges during each phase of this study, and the support of my mentors and research team have all contributed to the concept of myself as researcher and social justice advocate.

My unique contribution to academic literature, focused specifically on African-American women in academia, is in providing additional information that should be considered necessary towards supporting African-American women doctoral students. Particularly as it relates to the

desire of current African-American women doctoral students wishing to “reach back” or support future African-American women doctoral students. One hundred percent of my research participants acknowledged plans to use their experiences to make the academic experiences of future African-American women less isolating or threatening to their academic capability. Specifically, my research participants discussed using their dissertations and future research to add to the literature on African-American women graduate students, organizing affinity groups as current students or future counselor educators, and taking on the task of becoming a mentor to incoming African-American women graduate students. Reaching back to help other African-American women graduate students, current or perspective, become successful in the academic setting is recognized as a powerful component of this study that should be acknowledged by counselor educators when supporting this population. In addition, the significance of this communal support structure that each research participant claimed as vital to their success in their doctoral programs was not identified in current academic literature surrounding African-American women in academia.

Personal Context and Topic Choice

I believe my personal experiences of growing up in the southern part of the United States (U.S.) as an African-American woman, my awareness of gender roles across various North American cultures, and my initial attempts to advocate for women’s issues set the foundation for my position as a social justice advocate. The focus of my research population, research topic, and theoretical lenses used to frame the development of my study are all supported by a long and continued interest in social justice advocacy for women of various backgrounds and raising awareness on issues that continue to affect women in the U.S. today. Long before I began my doctoral studies, my areas of interest during my undergraduate career stemmed from feminist

studies and understanding the cognitive and social constructs that affect the lives of women. These areas of interests, resulting in two bachelor degrees in psychology and women's studies, were maintained during my graduate career, but were refocused through my career-track as a school counselor while I pursued my master's and specialist's degree in professional counseling.

Upon entering my doctoral program I sought an opportunity to deeply examine literature surrounding women's issues, specifically literature that included the experiences and voices of women of color related to feminist epistemology (Bastia, 2014; Bertrand-Jones, Osborne-Lampkin, & Wilder, 2013; Borum, 2006; Crenshaw, 1996; DeBlaere & Bertsch, 2013; Gopaldas, 2013; Walker, 1983; Warner & Shields, 2013; Williams, 2005) and was disheartened, not to mention insulted, by the lack of attention given to women of color and their experiences as it related to issues that impact the lives of women in the (U.S.). What I did find in the literature were that the few voices of women of color, specifically African-American women, were discovered buried in journal articles about African-American males in education and counseling. My belief had always been that women of color were as equally capable of participating in conversations about gender as much as they were capable of participating in conversations about race. Unfortunately, there appeared to be very few journal articles that agreed with me. This realization encouraged me to use the opportunity to provide at least one more area of research and scholarship that centers the voices and experiences of women of color, as part of my fulfillment to the degree of doctor of philosophy, in academic literature that has kept us silent.

I chose to focus my research study on African-American women doctoral students in counselor education to fill a gap in current counseling literature for this population and, as a member of the population being studied, provide a safe space for the participants of this population to talk and trust me with their experiences in doctoral level counselor education

programs. In addition to the lack of research on the experiences of women of color in counselor education programs, my other goals for this study were to encourage a level of awareness for counselor educators about the lived experiences of African-American women doctoral students and inform counselor educators on how best to advocate and support this population of students. Recognizing my goals as a multi-tasked project, I used a dissertation format that would allow me to accomplish each goal independently and as a collection of scholarly publications focused on women of color doctoral students. I also used a methodology that allowed me to remain aware of how I used literature and data to portray the voices and experiences of women of color doctoral students. According to Fassinger and Morrow (2013), in the end, it is the intention of the researcher, not the method, which dictates how research is conducted; whose voices are heard and whose voices are left out. As a social justice researcher I recognized the importance of being mindful of any biases or values that might influence my research process and how using social justice-oriented research can be used to empower individuals within their cultural context (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Cultural contextualization is considered one the foundations of social justice research, emphasizing the importance of researchers to collect and analyze data from within the context of the culture as well as the active stand against injustice in society (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008; Fassinger & Morrow, 2013).

Phenomenology as a Research Method

In the beginning of my research process, I was uncertain if I would use phenomenology (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Patton, 2002; Smith, 2008) or grounded theory (Amsteus, 2014; Charmaz, 2006; Lawrence & Tar, 2013; Walker & Myrick, 2006) as my methodological approach in regards to examining the experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs. Each research tradition offered a similar foundation for

examining the experiences of my participants, and the data collection and analysis process of each tradition could provide a culturally appropriate outlet for participants to discuss their experiences within their cultural context. Through careful consideration of my goals for this study and a supportive dialogue with my dissertation committee, phenomenology was chosen as the best fit for my study. Phenomenology is considered the best fit because my overall goal was to understand the meaning of their experiences in counselor education program specifically as it related to race and gender.

Developing a theory about their experiences, as is the goal of grounded theory, was not my true intention in creating this study, but understanding the meaning of participants' lived experiences in counselor education programs as it related to race and gender. According to Hays and Singh (2012) understanding the participants' lived experiences from their perspective is a powerful perspective in its own right. Once this study is published, I may refocus the topic of this study to conduct a future research study, using grounded theory, towards the development of a theory about the potential for African-American women doctoral students to enter faculty positions. Nevertheless, to understand the essence of the lived experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs I selected a phenomenological approach for the current study.

As mentioned earlier, the lack of literature on the lived experiences of African-American women doctoral students helped me see the importance of focusing on this specific population that might go overlooked by counselor educators. I have been a female student of color at a predominantly White university for over ten years, and as a result I recognize the value and importance of support and positive mentoring, especially at the doctoral level. I have observed and personally experienced what it is like to feel the pressure of representing for an entire group

of people, having to consistently disprove stereotypes in academic settings, and experiencing the social burden of when someone who looks like me does something that confirms a stereotype for African-Americans or African-American women. I recognize how being a woman of color in the southern part of the U.S. has taught me how to determine if a specific location, building, group of people, or event is safe for someone like me. I recognize how being a woman of color in the southern part of the U.S. has taught me who to ask for questions, how to ask, and what specifically not to ask to avoid being perceived as a stereotype. I recognize how being a woman of color in the southern part of the U.S. has taught me how to communicate and manage my emotions, such as when to speak up, when to apologize, when to get angry, when to get sad, and do all of this without being written off as an overly-emotional, angry Black woman. Therefore, my interests in this research topic are a personal extension of what I know to be the lived experiences in academia as an African-American woman.

My current academic experiences as a doctoral student in counselor education programs cannot be discussed without acknowledging how the intersection of race and gender have influenced those experiences, and therefore leads me to my guiding research question: How does the intersection of race and gender impact the experiences of being in a counselor education doctoral program for African-American women. Many participants spoke of general experiences in their doctoral programs, but many of these general experiences seemed to be in some way connected to the intersection of race and gender, such as selection of dissertation committee. One participant made a comment about her dissertation committee that validated a strategic maneuver I felt only I had made during my doctoral career in counselor education:

My whole committee is minority women. That was done intentionally because I felt like they could understand who I was and felt like they would give me the

support that I needed, and so all three have been instrumental in my educational experiences.

Hearing that another African-American woman doctoral student found the value in having an all minority doctoral committee as I had was empowering because I had experienced the same level of support from my committee members. I felt I could empathize with the participant's freedom of expression to ask for help or support for her research needs without the tiresome process of using coded language, or being worried that one's research interests might make a committee member uncomfortable.

As a phenomenological researcher and recognizing how my personal encounters with oppression have shaped my academic experiences, I remained cognizant of my emotions as I learned about my participants' personal encounters with oppression and how it had shaped their academic experiences, so that they could speak freely of their experiences without influence from me. One particular participant made a comment about her academic experiences that was in complete contrast to my experiences in academia overall. Her comment compelled me to remain aware of my emotions and how I communicated questions about her response, so that I did not convey judgment about her response or prevent her from talking more about her experiences. When asked about her relationship with the other students in her doctoral cohort, she stated she was the only African-American and only African-American female in her cohort, but that she was not made aware of this until the end of her first semester when a White cohort member pointed it out to her. Immediately recognizing the emotion her statement triggered for me as skeptical, I encouraged her to talk more about this through short probing questions and phrases, such as "Can you elaborate?" and "Say more, please."

I provide these two examples of comments from participants to indicate the emotional experiences of conducting research on a topic that is of personal relevance to me, and how I have had to be intentional in guiding my emotions with participants who spoke about their experiences in counselor education programs as African-American women doctoral students. Nevertheless, I found much of the information shared by the participants in my study to be consistent with academic literature, such as feelings of isolation, having resilience, and encounters with microaggressions. In addition, many participants, even those who were not first generation doctoral students, explained the inability to talk about their doctoral experiences with family members, which included spouses, due to the lack of understanding about the doctoral degree or simply not wanting to present as boastful.

Once my data had been collected and I began to conduct analysis, I began to reflect on what a participant had said to me during her interview:

I know what happens with these studies. They get archived and shelved in the university dissertation library.

Was she right? Was that the fate of my study? From the beginning of data collection, I had only been concerned about protecting the identity of my participants, the impact my study would have on participants and future African-American women who enter doctoral programs in counselor education programs, and how counselor educators would respond to my call to increase their awareness about this specific population of students. I had never considered my study might never make it beyond the university publication process. In addition, I found myself concerned with another potential barrier: acceptance. If my study succeeded in being published, would readers find value in my study and the experiences of my participants? Would readers dismiss

the experiences of my participants? Would my study be misconstrued and then used against the very population I intended to advocate for?

All of these doubts and feelings of vulnerability seemed to weigh in on me at the beginning of data collection; however, as I continued to collect data from participants through interviewing I reached an incredible realization. I was a social justice researcher. I was promoting what Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, described as popular education (Freire, 1973), a form of education for adults to not only increase literacy, but the consciousness of people with rights and duties within a society to address social conditions (Montero, 2007). My study, along with all the risks associated with social justice advocacy work, would increase the knowledge and awareness surrounding the issues impacting African-American women doctoral students, but would also develop the consciousness of counselor educators on how best to support this population of students. Therefore, if this study should find itself among the myriad of dissertations on the fourth floor of my university library, I intend to continue my work on behalf of women of color doctoral students through continued research, presentations, and someday as a practicing counselor educator.

I believe this research was significant and is capable of contributing valuable information relevant to understanding the experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs and how those experiences are influenced by race and gender. During many of my interviews, my participants thanked me for conducting this research, and one participant acknowledged her appreciation for being able to tell her story:

I really like the way you have your questions structured because I was able to really give a whole picture of who I am, and how important this is to me. That's why when I heard about your study, I was instantly like, 'Oh, I definitely want to be a part of that!'

Our story needs to be told. The deep conversations I entered into with my participants allowed me to emotionally connect with their experiences. Many of my interviews continued long after interview questions ended as we discussed where to find recommended books, possible attendance at future counseling conferences, pets, and connecting over social media networks. I believe these continued conversations were a direct result of connecting with someone who could understand and was willing to center their experiences as African-American women doctoral students specifically. An opportunity rarely, if ever, provided to this specific population of students. Each participant has acknowledge their interest in seeing the final product of this study and connecting with me in the future. Therefore I am grateful to the ten incredible women from across the U.S. who were willing to be a part of my study, and I am grateful for the privilege of conducting this study as a primary researcher.

The Theoretical Lenses of Intersectionality and Womanism

Combining a phenomenological research design with an intersectional and Womanist approach influenced how I communicated with my participants, interpreted and presented data including how the reader of this study perceived the information presented (Creswell, 2009). The use of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theoretical framework in this study was to emphasize the importance of acknowledging how multiple identities impact one's lived experiences and cannot be examined independently of the other (Gopaldas, 2013). Race and gender rather than race or gender is considered the only culturally appropriate method to examining the lives of African-American women in any given context. Therefore this study counters previous research models that have examined African-American women's experiences as separate components of identity, and through the theoretical lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) provide a culturally appropriate foundation for understanding the lived

experiences of African-American women doctoral students. The use of Womanism (Walker, 1983) as a theoretical framework in this study was to provide a structural component to the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) by developing a specific framework that emphasizes the historical combination of racism and sexism that has marked African-American women's struggle for equality since slavery (Borum, 2006). Therefore, the Womanist (Walker, 1983) researcher positions the intersection of race and gender as the focal point of the research process in understanding the essence or meaning behind the lived experiences of African-American women doctoral students.

In accordance with Womanist researcher positionality, the researcher within a Womanist (Walker, 1983) paradigm is an observer whose interpretations are shaped by political, cultural, and autobiographical stance (Borum, 2006). This means operating within the context of the participant. As a member of the population being studied, I found the Womanist (Walker, 1983) approach to be a naturalistic framework with which to engage my participants in active dialogue. I believe as an African-American woman I was able to interview participants from a cultural dialogue that gained a certain level of trust and credibility towards my interest in this study. For instance, a majority of my participants were interviewed over the phone, and I recognized that some participants might feel hesitant to recall personal and painful experiences related to race and gender without knowing if I was really who I said I was. The importance of my identity in relation to what participants shared had been confirmed with a participant I interviewed in person, she stated, "If you were not who you were, I wouldn't have shared that." Therefore the importance of acknowledging the receiver of the information as someone they could trust with their personal experiences was crucial, and the Womanist approach allowed me to interact with my participants from a culturally contextual form of communication. This form of

communication meant that I was able to be more personable with my participants, actively and personally involved in the interview process as opposed to only asking questions and receiving information. I firmly believed that even as a member of the population being studied if I had approached my participants, particularly those by phone, from a formal, rigid and guarded approach that suggested I was only interested in my research I would not have received the rich data provided to me. Therefore, the Womanist approach is believed to provide a culturally appropriate foundation for engaging with African-American women, and centering their experiences surrounding the intersection of race and gender.

Recommendations and Implications for Future Researchers

The continuation of future research on behalf of African-American women doctoral students is not only considered important in regards to adding to limited amounts of literature for this population, but continued research in this area is important towards building academic environments that support all students in higher education. By understanding the overlooked experiences of women of color doctoral students, specifically African-American doctoral students, counselor educators can better analyze how their departmental environment, including faculty members, supports African-American women doctoral students or promotes their isolation. There are two theoretical lenses that I examined in order to acknowledge the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs: (a) the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) which served as a general framework that validated the experiences of persons with multiple marginalized identities, and how these identities must be acknowledged together to understand their true lived experiences; and (b) Womanism (Walker, 1983) was used as a specific framework to build upon the theory of

intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) that illuminated the unique experiences of African-American women.

One of bell hooks's most popular statements that has been frequently cited in literature surrounding the experiences of African-American women is that no other group in America has had their identity socialized out of existence, and when discussions around race take place they center the experiences of African-American men and discussions on gender center the experiences of white women (hooks, 1981). African-American women's issues have taken a back seat to issues of race-only and gender-only consciousness (Sule, 2014), and appears to be an problem that originated long before African-American women were permitted to receive an education. Images of the women's suffrage movement of the early 1900's depict white women leading the movement of women's rights while black women were placed at the back of marches or in the "Blacks-Only" section of meeting rooms. They were permitted to participate, but not have a voice. Similarly, images of the civil rights movements in the early 1960's depict black men leading the movement of equal rights for blacks and giving speeches while black women were expected to support the cause by supporting black male leaders (Crocco & Waite, 2007). Once again, they were permitted to participate, but were expected to let the men take an active lead in the quest for equal rights. These attitudes are reflected in the speeches by male African-American activists whose primary agenda centered on racial equality (Crocco & Waite, 2007; Gopaldas, 2013). Many of whom seem to advocate that African-American women's role in education lied within the confines of motherhood and maintaining a supportive home environment (Crocco & Waite, 2007).

Fortunately, there were African-American women who refused to retreat into the shadows and made their experiences known, historical figures like Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia

Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, and Mary McLeod Bethune to name a few. In fact, Cooper criticized African-American male leaders for claiming to speak on behalf of their race, but failing to speak for African-American women (Crocco & Waite, 2007). The historical origin of this problem, African-American women's attempt to have their needs and unique experiences fully recognized, has, unfortunately, continued into the field of academia. The statements of this study's research participants reflect this struggle for validation of African-American women's experiences in higher education.

Where do we go from here? Future researchers should begin by acknowledging the origin of African-American women's struggle to receive full consideration regarding matters of race and gender, and how the lack of full recognition of their experiences have resulted in their needs being partially met because they are perceived as a version of someone else's problem. African-American women's issues and experiences deserved full attention. Therefore researchers wishing to contribute to the scant amount of literature dedicated toward African-American women's issues and experiences should consider a qualitative approach to fill the gaps in the current literature. Due to the need to understand the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students, qualitative research allows the researcher to acknowledge multiple realities (Creswell, 2013), and as a result explore and understand the meaning each individual ascribes to their unique experience (Creswell, 2009). Womanism (Walker, 1983) and the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) provided a culturally-appropriate theoretical foundation for analyzing the various academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students, and through the phenomenological approach provided participants an opportunity to center their experiences and perspectives as valuable components to an overall phenomenon.

For researchers interested in engaging in a similar study for African-American graduate students, I would encourage the use of additional theoretical constructs like black feminist theory (Collins, 2007). Using black feminist theory (Collins, 2007) to expand the focus of this study by including identity related to class may significantly contribute to the lack of research on African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs. Future researchers may find additional factors that contribute to the academic experiences of African-American women doctoral students when using the perspective of class or socioeconomic status. Therefore researchers are encouraged to widen the focus and theoretical parameters of future research studies interested in exploring the lived experiences of individuals with multiple marginalized identities.

For counselor educators wishing to support African-American women doctoral students, they should acknowledge the most powerful component that was revealed in this study which is the desire of African-American women doctoral students to support other African-American women doctoral students in their academic pursuits. Only using culturally-appropriate theoretical foundations for researching the lived experiences of African-American women doctoral students is not enough. Counselor educators should acknowledge the need for this support structure in their teaching and counseling practices when working with these students. This can include counselor educators being intentional about including more than one African-American women doctoral student in student groups or academic cohorts, so as to potentially lessen feelings of isolation or pressures of tokenism. Counselor educators can also provide safe spaces for these communities of support to develop among African-American women doctoral students through the organization of affinity groups or mentoring programs. The implications of this study and the importance of African-American women doctoral students having the opportunity to support one

another academically, emotionally, and socially is a key component towards counselor educators becoming advocates for this population of students.

Writing this dissertation has been a wonderful and humbling experience as I continue to grow and develop as a scholar and researcher. Having this opportunity to take a subject that I have been passion about for many years, become knowledgeable about the literature surrounding my topic of interest, and using my skills as a scholar and researcher to advocate on behalf of others has been an amazing privilege. Interestingly, I found the more I read into the literature surrounding the experiences of African-American women in higher education, the more passionate I became, and the more I dedicated I have become in continuing this work. As a result, I will use this dissertation as the foundation for my future research agenda as a counselor educator.

As mentioned earlier, I am especially grateful to the ten participants who were willing to trust me with their experiences, and allow me to use those experiences to educate future educators. Prior to conducting interviews, I feared my participants would misinterpret the goal of my study as an attempt to discount systemic injustice experienced by black men, especially in light of increasing media coverage surrounding police shootings of black men and civil marches advocating for the respect of black life in America. Each interview, however, revealed their excitement to talk about their unique experiences specifically as it related to their identity as African-American women. Some of the women acknowledged how they were delighted to be a part of a study designed just for their perspective. As a result of this research study and my participants, I have become stronger in my beliefs about the importance of acknowledging the lived experiences of African-American women as a specified group. I believe my conversations

with each participant justified the need to look beyond singular identity agendas, and incorporate a multiple identity focus within research.

I feel it is unfortunate African-American women are made to feel as though we cannot tell “our story” without being made to feel like we are aligning with the agendas of white women or turning our backs on issues impacting black men (Alexander-Floyd, 2014). This particular reality seems to be growing for me personally as I enter conversations within the black community about the recent announcement of Hilary Clinton’s campaign for presidency, and the growing ignorance underlining popular forms of social media attempting to resolve issues within the black community. For example, a few months ago, when social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, became saturated with phrases like, “#blacklivesmatter”, I could not help but notice the lack of inclusion that permeated these popular modes of advocacy. Primarily because the “#blacklivesmatter” appeared to be tailored to the injustices impacting African-American heterosexual men specifically as oppose to the systemic injustices impacting African-American women or African-American men who identified as gay, transgender, or bisexual. I never saw my story told whenever the “#blacklivesmatter” appeared on various forms of media platforms, and yet I, along with my research participants, had also experienced forms of injustice as African-American women. Did we not matter as well? According to Alexander-Floyd (2014), African-American women have also been subjected to violence and killings due to an unjust system in far greater numbers than white women and by men of both races. I ask then, “*Which #blacklivesmatter?*” Hearing the voices of my research participants, I am more dedicated to telling our story, recognizing its importance, and will continue to educate counselor educators who work with African-American women graduate students on how best to support their specific needs.

Now, after writing this dissertation, I believe I have accomplished the goal I initially sought to accomplish prior to beginning this study which is to continue the legacy of historical African-American women by getting our story out there. I hope that I have also served to encourage and advocate on behalf of currently enrolled African-American women doctoral students to continue in their pursuits and know they are not alone in this journey.

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Appendix A

Consent form

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM

A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Intersecting Identities of African-American Women in Counselor Education Programs.

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigators:

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706-340-2020

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the direct experiences of African-American Women doctoral students in counselor education programs, and understand how their subjective experiences are influenced by the intersection of race and gender.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- Participate in a one-time, audio-recorded interview with the primary researcher ranging from thirty minutes to an hour.
- Participants will be expected to review the transcriptions of their interview as created by the primary researcher for feedback. The primary researcher will provide participants the transcriptions in person or via email, fax, or postal service.
- Overall, participants can expect to contribute a maximum of two hours of their time toward this study.
- Participants will be asked to talk about their experiences as African-American women pursuing doctoral study in counselor education, and how these experiences may be influenced by the intersection of race and gender.

- Participants may be asked questions such as “As an African-American Woman doctoral student, what have been your academic experiences in counselor education as they relate to needing support?”

Risks and discomforts

- There may be psychological risks associated with this study, such as feelings of stress when discussing their experiences as African-American women pursuing doctoral study.
- There may also be social risks associated with this study, such as participants becoming more sensitive about their experiences in counselor education programs after their interview with the primary researcher.
- Participants will be informed of psychological and social risks prior to the study, and that they may discontinue participation at any time during the interview and after the interview has concluded.

Benefits

- Providing a safe space for African-American women doctoral students to discuss their academic experiences as they relate to race and gender that may not have been addressed until this study was provided.
- Benefits from this study include discovering new ways to address the needs of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs, and finding new ways counselor educators can advocate on behalf of this population of students.

Incentives for participation

Participants will be rewarded with a five dollar gift card to Target for their participation in this study.

Audio/Video Recording

This research study requires the audio taping of interviews and transcriptions of each interview in order to analyze the content presented by the participant after the interview has concluded. The tapes will be reviewed by the primary researcher, Taryne M. Mingo, doctoral candidate, The University of Georgia, and can be contacted at 706-340-2020 or taryne@uga.edu. All tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study in May 2015.

If you understand that this interview will be audio-recorded, please provide initials below

_____ I understand my interview will be audio-recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Upon completion of the interviews, participants' identifiable information will be removed after the participant has had an opportunity to review the interview transcription, and replaced with new identifiers that disguise the identity of the participant. Participants have the option to discontinue participation in the study at any time. This includes a retraction of the information provided during the interview including the days after the interview has concluded up until publication.

Individually-identifiable information from the tapes is confidential; however additional exceptions to confidentiality are:

1. You inform me in writing to discuss your situation with someone else.
2. It is determined that you are a threat to yourself or others.
3. I am ordered by a court to disclose information.
4. There is indication of child abuse that I am legally required to report.

Taking part is voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose to not participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. In addition, your decision to participate or stop participation in this study will have no impact on your grade of standing within your counselor education program.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Taryne M. Mingo, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Taryne M. Mingo at taryne@uga.edu or at 706-340-2020. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

“Participant Background” Interview Questions	Womanist Core Values
How old are you?	Background information
Where were you born?	Background information
Are you single, in a relationship, married, separated, or divorced?	Background information
Are you currently employed?	Background information
If yes:	
Where do you work?	
Are you part-time or full-time?	
Do you have children?	Background information
If yes:	
How many children?	
What is/are the age(s) of your child(ren)?	
What is your previous degree background?	Background information
What is your counseling background? (School counseling, community counseling, etc.)	Background information
Do you have a counseling theoretical orientation?	Background information
What type of clientele do you provide/anticipate providing counseling services for?	Background information
Do you have any specializations within counseling?	Background information
What is the name of your doctoral program?	Background information
What is the name of the college or university where you are pursuing graduate study?	Background information
In what year are you currently serving in your doctoral program?	Background information
What motivated you to pursue doctoral study in counseling education?	Background information
What are your career aspirations after graduation?	Background information
“Identity Awareness” Interview Questions	Womanist Core Values
What does being an African-American Woman mean to you?	Psychological Strength
Do you believe your experiences as an African-American and as a woman are connected? Or separated? How so?	Psychological Strength
If connected:	Psychological Strength
Can you think of any personal experiences that conveyed how your connected identity as an African-American woman was noticeable to you? To others?	
If separated:	Psychological Strength
Can you think of any personal that conveyed how being an African-American and a woman was noticeable to you as separate identities? Noticeable to others?	
What does being an African-American Woman doctoral student mean to you?	Psychological Strength
“Academic Experiences” Interview Questions	Womanist Core Values
As an African-American Woman doctoral student, what have been your	Emotional Wellness

academic experiences in counselor education as they relate to faculty relationships?	
As an African-American Woman doctoral student, what have been your academic experiences in counselor education as they relate to other doctoral students/cohort?	Emotional Wellness
As an African-American Woman doctoral student, what have been your academic experiences in counselor education as they relate to course work?	Emotional Wellness
As an African-American Woman doctoral student, what have been your academic experiences in counselor education as they relate to needing support?	Emotional Wellness
What have you considered to be the benefits (if any) of pursuing doctoral study?	Emotional Wellness
What have you considered to be the challenges (if any) of pursuing doctoral study?	Emotional Wellness
“Family History” Interview Questions	Womanist Core Values
Are you the first in your family to pursue doctoral study?	Background Information Emotional Wellness
If yes:	
1. What has the doctoral experience been like for you as a 1 st generation doctoral student?	
2. How has being a 1 st generation doctoral student influenced your family?	
If no:	Emotional Wellness
1. How has having a previous/current family member pursue/receive their doctorate influenced your experience in counseling education?	
2. How has your family responded to you pursuing doctoral study?	
“Support” Interview Questions	Womanist Core Values
What do you consider to be your academic support systems (i.e. mentors, classmates, etc.) as you move through the doctoral process?	Emotional Wellness
What do you consider to be your social support systems (i.e. parents, friends, religious affiliations, etc.) as you move through the doctoral process?	Emotional Wellness
“Responsibility” Interview Questions	Womanist Core Values
If an African-American Woman informed you that she was interested in applying to the doctoral program in counselor education, where you currently study, what would you tell her?	Resilience
As an African-American woman pursuing a doctoral degree, what changes would you make in the academic field to ensure the success of future African-American women who enter doctoral programs?	Resilience

Appendix C

Codebook

Meaning Unit	Theme	Sub-Theme	Textual Description	Example(s)
Psychological Strength	“If I Do One Thing Wrong, I Represent All Black People”	Tokenism	This theme focuses on the experiences of African-American women doctoral students feeling pressure to be the “representative” for their racial group.	So it’s like when you’re the only one and everybody’s looking towards you for answers for certain things. So say if we’re in a multicultural class and talking about African-Americans, people sort of go to you for that, and sometimes you become the token And it just kind of happens.”- Tammy, 363
Psychological Strength	“Dang, There Are No Other Brown Female Faces?”	Outsider-Within	A form of identity, and form of microaggression, when an individual feels isolated as a result of a lack of individuals who look like them or when there is a lack of representation in course material that represent their identity group (Sue et al, 2007).	“It is frustrating when...especially like in my social justice class...we are asked to read a lot of stuff that I don’t feel like applies to me.”- Kim, 312
		Space	A social barrier faced by African-American women doctoral students when other students, specifically white students, prohibit African-American women doctoral students from claiming equal space to participate in the academic	“I don’t know if they prevent us from leaving because they don’t want us to excel? I feel like, there’s this whole, ‘I am the epitome of what a counselor educator looks like, and I don’t want one of my students who is my subordinate to come up and be on my equal footing.’”-

		setting.	IR, 1877
Emotional Wellness	“Having Support Makes A Difference Whether You Sink or You Swim”	This theme focuses on the importance of African- American women doctoral students receiving support both within and outside academia as a means towards degree completion.	“Knowing, like, how important that mentoring piece is, and it makes a difference whether someone sinks or they swim.”-Kay, 947
Resilience	“Iron Sharpens Iron”	This theme focuses on the unanimous interests of African- American women doctoral students desire to support other African- American women doctoral students by assisting them in the navigation process of higher education, helping them become academically successful, and continue the legacy of helping others.	“It’s been amazing...to a point where I can now go back and tell others what to expect. I can give suggestions on how to navigate because I didn’t know how.”-GS, 768

Appendix D

Demographic Information for Research Participants

NAME	AGE	UNIVERSITY LOCATION	PROGRAM FORMAT	PROGRAM STATUS	OCCUPATION	FIRST GENERATION
IR	37	Duluth, GA	Traditional	ABD	School Counselor	Yes
GS	40	Duluth, GA	Traditional	First Year	Private Practice/ Asst. Clinical Director and Teacher at B. University	Yes
Kay	49	Winston- Salem, NC	Traditional	Second Year	Dept. of Veteran Affairs Counselor	No
Tammy	26	Akron, OH	Traditional	Second Year	Graduate Assistant	Yes
Terry	40	Atlanta, GA	Hybrid	Second Year	Military and Family Counselor	No
Kim	28	Duluth, GA	Traditional	First Year	School Counselor	Yes
Alisha	49	Minneapolis, MN	Hybrid	ABD	Mental Health Counselor	Yes
Toni	47	Minneapolis, MN	Hybrid	ABD	Private Practice	No
Casey	38	Lubbock, TX	Traditional	ABD	Graduate Assistant	Yes
Renee	39	Williamsburg, VA	Traditional	ABD	Graduate Assistant	Yes

**Names have been changed to protect the identity of the participant*

Figure 1

The Communitarian Model: Tenets, Purpose, Content, and Processes

Steps	Tenets	Purpose	Content	Process
1	Anti-oppression	The CE engages in self-reflection, addresses preconceptions and personal biases as they relate to women of color doctoral students that may hinder support given to this population. While also becoming a resource and source of support for WOCDS.	<p>-Peer Supervision w/ fellow faculty member</p> <p>-<i>The Womanist Reader</i> (Phillips, 2006)</p> <p>-<i>The Womanist Idea</i> (Maparyan, 2012)</p> <p>-<i>Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality</i> (Crenshaw, 1996)</p> <p>-List of campus resources that to support needs of WOCDS</p> <p>-A compilation of journal articles about graduate experiences for WOC (preferably authored by WOC)</p>	<p>1. Schedule repeated peer supervision sessions with another faculty member to assist in on-going self-reflection</p> <p>2. Increase knowledge base of Womanist theory and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1996) as a theory</p> <p>3. Provide WOCDS with campus resources and counseling articles that relate to their concerns in effort to promote a positive identity</p> <p>4. Set aside time with WOCDS to write self-affirming statements to promote empowerment and positive identity in the graduate school setting</p>
2	Vernacular	Explore commonalities among CE and WOCDS as a means of advocating the importance of unity over division, and educate counseling professionals of the systemic practices that maintain division.	- Peer Supervision w/ fellow faculty member	<p>1. Continue repeated peer supervision sessions with another faculty member to assist in on-going self-reflection</p> <p>2. Advocate for increased support w/in counseling department for WOCDS</p> <p>3. Organize faculty and student retreats</p> <p>4. Set aside time to visit WOCDS in their professional settings</p> <p>5. Begin including WOCDS in the development of conference presentations, articles, and texts to advocate for WOCDS in other counseling programs</p>

3	Non-ideological	Remove lines of demarcation between faculty and student populations, and create positive interrelationships that encourage inclusiveness across faculty and student populations of intersecting identities.	-Peer Supervision w/ fellow faculty member -Develop WOCDS Support Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue repeated peer supervision sessions with another faculty member to assist in on-going self-reflection 2. Meet w/ departmental faculty to organize WOCDS support team 3. Inform WOCDS about support team 4. Schedule repeated meetings w/ WOCDS as mentor or member of support team 5. Recruit a diverse faculty department that reflects student body
4	Communitarian	Recognize the importance of common welfare of all persons, and should be considered everyone's responsibility to promote social change; giving voice to WOCDS through affinity groups	--Peer Supervision w/ fellow faculty member -Affinity Groups for WOCDS (general to specific, i.e. racial categories)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue repeated peer supervision sessions with another faculty member to assist in on-going self-reflection 2. Recruit faculty members to join affinity group 3. Connect w/ WOCDS interested in participating in affinity groups
5	Spiritualized/ Luxocracy	Learn new and creative ways to build positive relationships despite differences. Working with WOCDS to promote institutional and social change	-Peer Supervision w/ fellow faculty member -Student-oriented project focused on inclusivity and encourages positive relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue repeated peer supervision sessions with another faculty member to assist in on-going self-reflection 2. Continue to participate in affinity groups 3. Conduct student-led project that geared toward building new and positive relationships.

Note. Adapted from Janee M. Steele's Liberation Model (2008) in "Preparing Counselors to Advocate for Social Justice: A Liberation Model."

Key: WOCDS: women of color doctoral students

CE: counselor educator