

THE BLACK CEILING: THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN  
AMERICAN FEMALES IN THE CES PROFESSORATE

by

Sharon V. Lewis

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study highlighted the lived experiences of six African American female professors in the counseling education and supervision professorate. The professors were faculty within universities across the United States in the mid-Atlantic, southern, and midwestern regions. This study obtained data from semi-structured interviews as well as photovoice submissions from the interview participants in order to identify experiences which facilitated their persistence in the professorate and overcoming internal and external barriers. The research problem was the underrepresentation of African American females within the counseling education and supervision professorate, which further facilitates minority students' attrition and underrepresentation. A thematic analysis of the source data revealed five themes and three subthemes. The themes were mentors facilitated persistence, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family support, external barriers (referred to as the Black ceiling), and persistence. The subthemes were encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status. The study revealed that in the face of adverse external barriers, persistence in the counseling education and supervision professorate was facilitated by the positive influence of mentors, callings, and encouragers despite discrimination, loneliness and invisibility, and intersectionality and minority status.

*Keywords:* African American female professors, counselor education and supervision, internal/external barriers, Black ceiling

## **Dedication**

“With praise and thanks, they sang this song to the Lord: ‘He is so good! His faithful love for Israel endures forever!’ Then all the people gave a great shout, praising the Lord because the foundation of the Lord’s Temple had been laid” (Ezra 3:11, New Living Translation).

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord God Jehovah for laying this foundation and using me to speak my truth to the hearts, minds, and souls of generations. I pray that these words are acceptable offerings to my all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-present Savior. Because you saw me, I saw others. Thank You!

I now turn to my earthly parents, my dad, Elder Clayton Harris, and my mom, Willia Frances Harris, who have both made me think I could do anything. Your words of love, support and encouragement since I was a child made me feel invincible. I honor you both!

To my sweet husband, Frederick Gene Lewis: Your belief in me is truly amazing, your support unwavering, and your encouragement empowering. Thank you for being in my life. I love you.

## **Acknowledgments**

In her poem “Our Grandmothers” Maya Angelou said, “I go forth along, and stand as ten thousand.” The translation is simply, “I stand as one person, but the army on whose shoulders I stand and lean, number in the thousands.”

A few of those ten thousand are my amazing children, Drika, Jordan, and Joshua! Your validations and affirmations gave me strength to persist when I did not think I had any more in me to give. I persevered by utilizing your energy. Thank you!

The gratitude I have for my dissertation committee is immeasurable. Thank you, Dr. Sosin (my anointed dissertation chair), Dr. Pride, and Dr. Mwendwa (my committee extraordinaire). Your guidance, insight and enthusiasm were beacons along the way. You all share a spirituality that illuminated truth and purpose in this work. You saw beyond a study and showed me my life’s direction. I am forever grateful.

To my coresearchers, “thank you” is inadequate; you truly made this study possible. Your persistence is infectious and your drive contagious. You shared not just your stories, but your lives. You did not withhold your ups nor your downs. You paved the way for others to follow. Journeying with you has made me a better person. I am eternally indebted to you. I now know what to do to impact others as you have impacted me. Thank you.

Family, friends, church family and colleagues: thank you. Dexter, Ronald, Don, Herbert, Annette, Barbara, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, Pastors Mark and Linda and my Church for all Nations family, your well wishes and prayers carried me. Barb and Curtiss, TJ, Wanda. Deb, Dorothea, Trina, Bob and Toni, John and Michelle, Charles and Teresa, Rick and Michelle, my C4 partners, CFAN Elders, and everyone who carried me in your hearts, thoughts and prayers while I trekked to the finish line.

To my counselor education family, thank you. Dr. Nivischi and Dr. Deacon, you motivated me with your passion for this amazing field. Dr. Harrichand, Dr. Lakin, Dr. Most, Dr. Kimball, Dr. Phillips, Dr. Camden, Dr. Davilla, Dr. Ponce, and Dr. Trexler, you led the way, then encouraged me to follow. And the soon-to-be Dr. Lee, Dr. France, Dr. Ybarra, Dr. Harris, Dr. Juarez Palma, Dr. Marsh, and Dr. Vincas-Cua, I'll see you at the finish line.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

African American male counselor educators (AAMCE)

American Counseling Association (ACA)

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)

Counselor education and supervision (CES)

Critical race theory (CRT)

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Internalized Racial Oppression Scale (IROS)

Predominantly White institution (PWI)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Demographics for the United States of America are changing and rapidly diversifying (Brooks & Steen, 2010; Colby & Ortman, 2015; Sue & Sue, 2008). While some diversity increase is the result of natural occurrences (births), the majority is through immigration and migration (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017b). In 2017 the United States census reported the population as 325.7 million, 50.8% female, 13.4% Black/African American, and almost half of the 13.4% are African American females. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017a), women make up 47% of the United States' payroll labor force. There are concerns about where women are hierarchically in the labor force; their presence in higher paying, more visible leadership positions is less than expected. Additionally, the attainment of this 47% has not been without some challenges (e.g. discrimination, oppression, racism, sexism; Baggerly et al., 2017). Racial diversity increased in the United States from 16.5% in 1970 to 36.3% in 2010 (Baggerly et al., 2017). Change overtime is evident; in 1960, the general population was 88.6% White, 10.5% African American, and 4.5% Latina/o, but 2014 showed a vast change to 73.8% White, 12.6% African American, and 16.9% Latina/o (Baggerly et al., 2017). Demographics continue to change through 2018 to a total U.S. population of 327,167,434 with White as 60.7%, Black as 13.4%, Hispanic as 18.1%, and foreign-born persons from 2013 to 2017 as 13.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Racial/ethnic minorities are not only increasing within the general population, but, not surprisingly, they are fast growing in the nation's colleges and universities. Given these increasing numbers, multicultural learning must be addressed (Ovink & Veazey, 2011; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). While minorities have increased in academic settings as enthusiastic recipients of education, due to their racial and ethnic identities and some of their personal histories, they have

also increased as victims of discrimination, oppression, and racism (Baggerly et al., 2017) as well as beneficiaries of counseling services. Statistics on the 2016 prevalence of any mental illness among U.S. adults can be found in Appendix B. The National Institute of Mental Health (2016) reported that 15.7% of Hispanics, 14.5% of Blacks, and 12.1% of Asians reported being affected by mental illness, and 31.0%, 29.3%, and 21.6% of those numbers respectively received mental health treatment. Statistics on mental health treatment received in past year among U.S. adults with any mental illness can be found in Appendix C. The need for counselor educators competent in educating direct service providers and counselors to serve these diverse populations is increasing as the rate of the diverse populations themselves increase.

It stands to reason that as America's neighborhoods and cities are diversifying, so are its colleges and universities, and it is ultimately the responsibility of those colleges and universities to prepare its attendees to successfully transition and effectively incorporate into a multicultural world (Hurtado et al., 2012). Because teaching and counseling are interrelated in this conversation, one place to begin to address this developing challenge is in counseling organizations such as the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), which is undergirded with the ethics of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and facilitated by those invested in multicultural counseling and counseling education issues on multiple levels (personally, institutionally, societally). The efforts of counselor education and counselor educators are essential in the effort to create protections against barriers for the marginalized and minoritized, but problems arise when those tasked with this honorable, yet difficult, assignment are themselves victims of equivalent indignities (discrimination, oppression, racism and stereotyping). These indignities are regularly experienced particularly by African American female faculty (Bradley, 2005; Bradley &



Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Patton, 2004; Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 2008).

Racism, in the simplest terms, is defined as discrimination against someone's race mainly through beliefs about that person's race rather than actions, while elite racism disallows minority worldviews in academia (Coleman, 2005). Racism is an ordinary occurrence for faculty of color, and it is from their perspective that the fight against institutional racism must begin, starting with the acknowledgment that the social construct of race has historically shaped university structures, policies, practices, and discourses for students as well as for faculty (Yosso et al., 2009). Race fatigue, minorities being overextended and undervalued, is often the result of this problem (Harley, 2008). Oppression, including racism, can have devastating and long-term effects on individuals' emotions as well as their mental and physical well-being; African American females are no different concerning their experiences in the academy (Banks & Stephens, 2018; Shillingford et al., 2013).

Oppression can be both systemically and individually upheld. Women faculty of color in higher education, because they are from oppressed groups, may be systemically oppressed in the classroom, which weakens their effectiveness as teachers and taxes their emotional well-being. Oppression hinders growth, creativity, and freedom and while incidences may be discrete, the ramifications are connected and widespread (Pittman, 2010). Women often have excellent skills, but they are often disadvantaged (oppressed) in acquiring positions despite being well qualified (Beckwith et al., 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). This reality affects women in general, but women of color experience additional challenges. Women positioned intersectionally by race and gender often experience gendered racism (racist sexism), which causes double exclusions: one by race, the other by gender (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002; Collins, 2000; Pittman, 2010).

This double disadvantage creates an external barrier doubly reinforced (racism & sexism; Beckwith et al., 2016). Because Black women experience multiple marginality (race and gender; Ford, 2011) in the academy, they are constantly deciding which lens to filter experiences through, such as race or gender (Harris, 2012). Additionally, this multiple marginalities creates barriers often experienced by African American women as impenetrable.

Airen (2017) described the term “color ceiling” as including barriers that obstruct financial and employment equity; Hyun (2005) addressed “bamboo ceilings,” which are considered to affect those of Asian descent; and Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) discussed the term “concrete wall,” which refers to thicker barriers experienced by women of color due to their multiple marginality. McGirt (2017) identified this same concept as a “Black ceiling.” Many are familiar with the term “glass ceiling,” which was introduced in 1984 and suggests external barriers hinder well-qualified women from advancing to the highest levels in organizations (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gamble & Turner, 2015). The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission was established in 1991 to further investigate this phenomenon (Gambler & Turner, 2015). The Black ceiling, however, is less known, less researched, and therefore less understood. This concept suggests that African American women face concrete (solid) obstacles as opposed to more fragile (glass) ones (McGirt, 2017). There may still exist a glass ceiling between women and minorities and senior leadership, and as seen in Table 1, this dynamic seems to exist more with African Americans in CACREP faculty than it does with males overall, Whites, Asians, or Latina/o (Baggerly et al., 2017).

**Table 1**

*Percentage of Current General Population Compared with APA and CACREP Students and Faculty*

Demographic	U.S. Population	Students		Faculty	
		APA	CACREP	APA	CACREP
Male	49.2	25.96	17.46	46.61	39.47
Female	50.8	73.69	82.52	53.80	60.43
White	73.8	58.06	61.12	72.76	75.10
Black	12.6	13.31	19.40	7.36	12.32
Asian	5.0	10.90	1.86	6.64	3.72
Latina/o	16.9	9.80	7.75	5.96	4.84

*Note:* Data are from 2014. APA = American Psychological Association. Adapted from “Race, ethnicity, and gender of faculty members in APA and CACREP accredited programs: Changes over five decades,” by J. Baggerly, T. X. Tan, D. Pichotta, & A. Warner, 2017, *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 45(4), 292–303. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12079>.

Sexist oppression is well noted, but according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), African Americans are the most likely to be oppressed and experience unemployment, underemployment, and seasonal employment across the board (Chaney, 2014).

### **Background of the Problem**

The themes of education, women in education, African Americans in education, and African American women in education are commonly discussed in the literature. While African American women in the professorate may not be as well discussed in the literature, they are not completely overlooked. However, they may be potentially misunderstood, and the problems expressed largely unsolved. Although special attention may be paid to the plight of women and minorities, little headway is being made in recruitment, employment, and promotion in academia (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Despite the historical dominance of men in academia, women are slowly taking their place in this arena, but not without some resistance (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In the United States, males have

outnumbered females in the professorate since the 19th century (Parker, 2015), and this dynamic remains current. See Appendix A for demographics of full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by academic rank, race/ethnicity, and sex.

The reasons for the dominance of men in academia may be internally self-imposed in addition to being externally superimposed and could include personal value systems, namely women's desires to remain more available to family (gendered role expectations; Pittman, 2010), lack of interest in male-dominated fields, or intolerance for being oppressed or discriminated against (Parker, 2015). The problems discussed in the literature concerning African American women in higher education include discrimination, oppression, racism, and underrepresentation (Baggerly et al., 2017). These problems facilitate an underrepresentation of diversity, which creates homogeneity. Problematically, homogenous faculty fails to represent diversity of thought, creates groupthink, and disallows a robust exchange of ideas (Moses, 2017; Springer & Westerhaus, 2006).

The issue of underrepresentation is not limited to the United States. Neither the United States, New Zealand, Finland, Australia, Ireland, nor the United Kingdom have more than 17% women in the professorate (Gallant, 2014; Xiang et al., 2017). Teaching in higher education remains one of the least integrated professions (Springer & Westerhaus, 2006). This truth is especially disconcerting given the increased minority population on college campuses who could benefit from a more diverse faculty. Advancement, in terms of promotion and tenure, made by Hispanic, Black, and Asian female professors in higher education is scarce and challenges are ample (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). Black women educators are often segregated because they are differentiated from both White and Black males because of their gender and from White women because of their race; the result is isolation which highlights "otherness"

(Pittman, 2010). This underrepresentation and otherness create a sense of double disadvantage and dual bias (race & gender; Beckwith et al., 2016). Being part of an underrepresented group does not discount the need for members of that underrepresented group's voice to be heard in education (Coker, 2011; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Madyun et al., 2013). The natural propensity of an underrepresented group to manifest diversity across groups further speaks to the need in higher education to challenge underrepresentation when possible and to facilitate intercultural competence in the meantime (Coker, 2011; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Madyun et al., 2013).

The notion of intercultural competence, the aptitude to effectively connect across cultures, has become a learning outcome for many college students, and facilitating cross-cultural discourses may be instinctive for faculty of color (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Madyun et al., 2013). While it is expected that all faculty are interculturally competent, faculty of color, due to their daily lived experience and cultural bilingualism (Moore & Tolliver, 2010), may be particularly instrumental in steering students as they negotiate intercultural contexts. More than just an ability to understand cross-culturalism, intercultural competence encompasses mindfulness, gratitude, and enjoyment of cultures (Madyun et al., 2013). While intercultural competence is benefit added, challenges both internal and external hinder forward progress of African American women in the professorate. Internal challenges include internalized racial oppression, while external challenges include discrimination, oppression, and racism, to name a few.

Although discrimination is not distinct to women, according to Hurtado et al. (2012), in academia it is reported twice as much by women than men (Haskins et al., 2016). Academic institutions, like all institutions, are responsible for producing, facilitating, and ensuring equality

and just treatment for all (Hurtado et al., 2012). An exhaustive understanding of discrimination is imperative due to the fact that discriminatory acts continue to occur, but the lived experiences of the privileged are vastly different from those of the marginalized, and without scrutiny, these acts may be minimized and overlooked (Harris, 2012). Barriers faced by African American faculty are multifaceted and include historical, cultural, and social injustices (Allen et al., 2000). These barriers not only contribute to continuing discrimination and educational inequity but to the underrepresentation of African Americans among college faculty (Allen et al., 2000). A primary reason why discrimination in the United States particularly is intolerable, colleges and universities notwithstanding, relates to the nation's amplified diversification. Educators need to ultimately shoulder the responsibility of becoming standard-bearers and manifesting a successful transition into a multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial world (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014).

Indicative of the aforementioned diversification is the reality that while women are obtaining higher education degrees, men still occupy more high-ranked faculty positions (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). When classroom environments are welcoming, supportive, and accepting of female faculty of color, further faculty diversity is nurtured, but when they are unwelcoming, faculty diversity is stalled (Pittman, 2010). Inequalities (legal, social, and psychological, including stereotypes) experienced by many African Americans are the result of current social conditioning and are at the root of hindered diversification and external barriers (Brown et al., 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Combined realities such as interpersonal and institutional racial oppression, awareness of overrepresentation of African American individuals in low-status careers, and lack of role models or mentors in high-status careers may contribute to African Americans' internal negative self-perception and to the

existence of barriers (Brown et al., 2017; Brown & Lent, 2013; Brown & Segrist, 2016). The combined effects of historical inequalities, and the reality of present day lived experiences create and maintain injustices that have continued to plague African American women in the professorate.

### **Statement of the Problem**

African American female counselor educators are similar to other female faculty in that they are often challenged by sexism, tenure, promotion, work-life balance, and the glass ceiling. However, unlike other female counselor educators, African American female counselor educators are additionally challenged with racism and colorism, historical stereotypes, and the black ceiling (Bryant et al., 2005). For many, it is difficult to stand in confidence and mastery in front of any audience, including a classroom, when negative derogatory images intrude into one's consciousness, creating a divided self and double consciousness (Levin et al., 2013). Black women have generally had to negotiate "femaleness and Blackness" (Pittman, 2010, p. 186) along with stereotypical roles of the nurturing Mammy (faithful, obedient, self-sacrificing, domestic, subordinate), or the Sapphire (loud, animated, irresponsible, untrustworthy, strong-willed; Pittman, 2010), while they are trying to solidify their reputations as academics (Bryant et al., 2005; Pittman, 2010). Chimamanda Adichie, in her 2009 TED Talk, stated that stereotypes are problematic not simply because they are untrue, but also because they are incomplete. They paint a single story starting from a set point, but do not include the entire story to give context or the necessary framework (Adichie, 2009). If the story of Mammy does not include her motivation to survive for her progeny, then her persona appears weak. Bradley (2005) added to this dialogue by highlighting that historically the Mammy persona was rooted in slavery, and she served as the always-happy, ready-to-soothe, primary caretaker of the master's home. Langston

Hughes (1921) added to this single story when he depicted her true motivation in his poem “The Negro Mother”: “I nourished the dream that nothing could smother, Deep in my breast—the Negro mother” (para. 4). Mammy’s always-happy persona takes on a new meaning in this poem. Bradley (2005) pointed out that Sapphire was Mammy’s opposite: unintelligent, loud, obnoxious, and incompetent. African American women, faculty included, are often tasked with managing these diametrically opposed stereotypes while being regularly branded as one or the other (Bradley, 2005; Bryant et al., 2005; Pittman, 2010; West, 1995). The goal for female faculty of color is not to acquiesce and accept an oppressor’s view of them as truth but instead to incorporate aspects of the stereotype and reframe them as beneficial (Banks & Stephens, 2018; Pyke, 2010). In this approach, the stereotype need not be internalized but appropriated; the stereotype of Sapphire becomes an archetype of strength, resilience, or grit, as opposed to the negative nagging stereotype accepted by some other oppressive view (Banks & Stephens, 2018; Bradley, 2005; Duckworth, 2016; Harley, 2008; Pyke, 2010). This challenge to the historical image of who an academic should be makes allowance for something historically considered strange and unusual to now become a part of the fabric of the new academic (Dowdy, 2008). Reframing historical stereotypes is arduous, but other challenges are pertinent.

A main challenge with African American female faculty is their underrepresentation, which correlates with African American students’ enrollment in institutions of higher education and persistence towards college graduation. African American students are more likely to enroll and persist when institutions recruit and retain African American faculty (Allen et al., 2000). The perception of “typical” academician is challenged by underrepresented faculty, who are themselves often intersectionally marked and “othered,” thereby identifying with marginalized students (Chang et al., 2013). Underrepresentation of minority faculty has been linked to



minority student attrition (Baggerly et al., 2017; Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003) and foundationally does not align with goals of diversification. Failure of the academy to alter the trajectory of African American women counselor educators in the professorate may simultaneously affect the representation of minority students in academia, as the two dynamics are synergistically linked (Bradley, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014; Turner et al., 2008).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Underrepresentation of any group can lead to lack of inclusion of voices that may be instrumental in bringing change, facilitating growth, and encouraging diversity (Han & Leonard, 2017; Louis et al., 2016). The primary purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore and understand the state of African American women in the professorate, with a particular emphasis on the counselor education and supervision (CES) professorate, bringing attention to influences which may be hindering efforts of legitimate attempts to attract, recruit, and retain African American women in the professorate (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). An extensive literature review described themes affecting this dynamic, which include individual values, barriers (internal and external), racism, oppression, discrimination, attraction, recruitment, and retention, resulting in either persistence or underrepresentation.

### **Research Questions**

The values, barriers (internal and external), racism, oppression, discrimination, attraction, recruitment, and retention, which result in either persistence or underrepresentation of African American women in the professorate, led to the phenomenological, retrospective approach to answering the research question: “What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors’ experiences that contributed to their persistence in the

academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?” The investigation of the underrepresentation of African American women in the professorate must be viewed through lenses which provide the best likelihood for answering the research question.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Because education has long been viewed as a means to end oppression, aid liberation, and facilitate racial uplift for the marginalized, many minoritized people choose this route for their own individual and, sometimes, group success (Edghill-Walden et al., 2018). The hope was liberation through education during the postslavery shift to industry from agriculture (Edghill-Walden et al., 2018). Black women have been at the forefront of this movement, and, including Sarah Jane Early Woodson, who in 1858 became the first African American college professor, have always been a part of this liberation effort (Bradley, 2005; Perkins, 2009). The determination toward education continued with Mary Jane Patterson, who in 1862 was the first African American woman to receive a bachelor of arts degree, and then with Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, Eva Beatrice Dykes, and Georgiana Rose Simpson, who in 1921 were the first female African American doctoral recipients (Dowdy, 2008; Griffin, 2016; Perkins, 2009). While an admirable start, since then, the experiences of African American women professors have been riddled with barriers (Banks & Stephens, 2018; Sue & Sue, 2008). According to the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics, recruitment and retention of diverse faculty is an ethical responsibility (ACA, 2014; Cartwright et al., 2018), and recruitment and retention of faculty that represent a variety of life experiences, backgrounds, and identities is an important part of the diversification process (CACREP, 2015; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; Turner et al., 2008). This has not always manifested in reality.

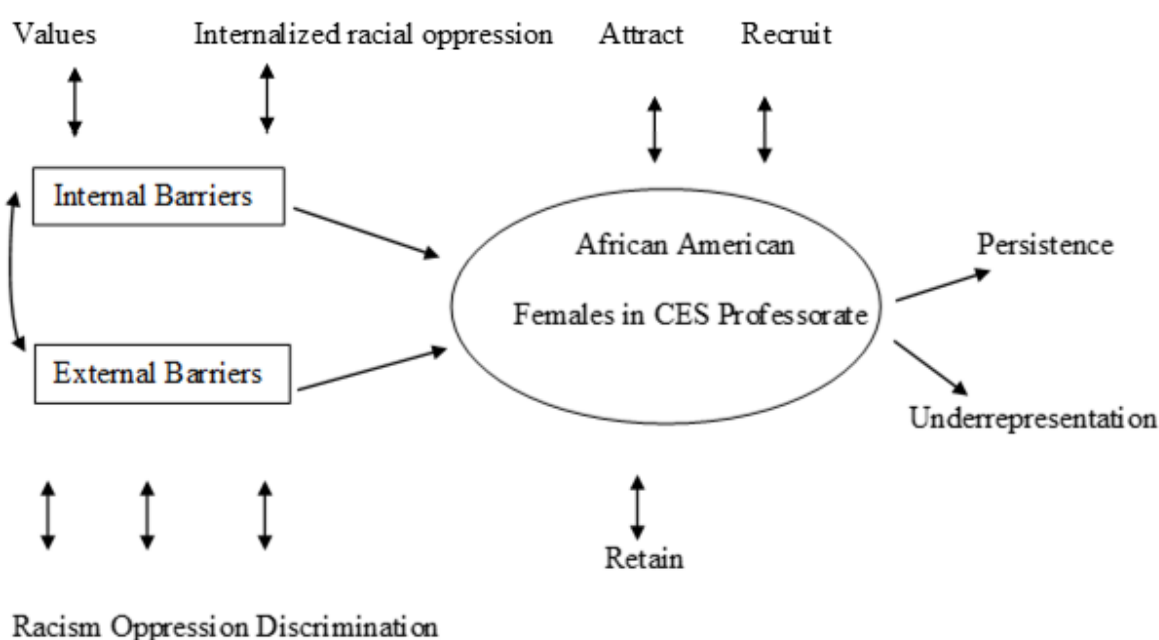
Pioneer Thelma Daley became the first African American to serve as president of the American School Counselor Association in 1971. Daley followed this impressive accomplishment by becoming the first African American president, and only the third female president, of ACA in 1975 (Coker, 2011). As she discussed the group known as the Association of Non-Whites, and their concerns, she shared how she would like to be remembered for paving the way and modeling the importance of giving voice to the voiceless, but she also acknowledged organizational resistance from an organization publicized as one of diversity and inclusion; the battle for equality and diversity for people of color was difficult (Coker, 2011). Knowing the journey of African American women forms the foundation of this research.

While the concept of diversity is not limited to African American women only, the scope of this paper is to explore the lived experiences of African American female counselor educators from a qualitative, phenomenological, retrospective stance in hopes of discovering, “What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors’ experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?” Negotiation of barriers and organizations’ purposefulness and skillfulness in attracting, recruiting, and retaining diverse faculty is a precursor to diverse faculty’s representation within educational institutions. Barriers that might impede African American women from persisting in the professorate could be either internal or external. Internal barriers recurrent in the literature include individually held values and issues of internalized racial oppression. Individually held values are those ideals deemed sacred to the believer while internalized racial oppression are those negative beliefs adapted from others. An example of an individually held value that also serves as an internal barrier is the belief that the role of a wife and/or a mother is more important than that of an academic, therefore such a career is not

pursued (Gamble & Turner, 2015). Internalized racial oppression manifests itself in the self-critical belief that one is either incapable or unworthy, despite truth to the contrary (Speight, 2007). External barriers serve as barricades to hinder upward movement, and include racism, oppression, and discrimination; these systems of oppression are superimposed by others (Brown et al., 2017). In addition to internal and external barriers, objectives and competence of diversity conscious organizations to attract, recruit, and retain diverse faculty also facilitates persistence of diverse faculty versus their underrepresentation. The more effective organizations are in these efforts, the more minority representation they will garner and enjoy. Figure 1 is a graphic display of this process.

**Figure 1**

*Internal and External Barriers Affecting African American Women in CES*



### Theoretical Framework

The experiences of African American female counselor educators can appropriately be explored utilizing qualitative research and interpreted through the lenses of critical race theory

(CRT) and feminist theory, with peripheral attention given to Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise because concomitantly these theories synergize to address race, gender, and vocation. CRT, while it has no single unchanging tenet, encompasses the idea that racial difference is created, maintained, and played out in society. An integral part of this concept is the view of racism as complex, subtle, and flexible, in that its definition changes based upon context and the holder of such beliefs (Gillborn, 2015). It is imperative to view the experiences of African American female counselor educators through this holistic lens of CRT because their experiences cannot be separated from their race or gender, nor their race from inequities perpetuated upon the Black, nor their gender from inequities perpetuated upon women. CRT argues that racism occurs on a daily basis and affects people of color although it is often not acknowledged or recognized by dominant culture (Diggs et al., 2009; Levin et al., 2013). Because there is the possibility that racism may go unacknowledged or unrecognized, CRT provides a viewpoint which highlights the effects institutional norms and policies have on faculty who experience racial or ethnic inequalities (Levin et al., 2013; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). American culture was founded with racism as its backdrop, and its history is entrenched in longstanding institutions which maintain enduring policies and practices which are adversarial towards minorities (Diggs et al., 2009; Levin et al., 2013).

Another part of CRT, intersectionality, adds depth to understanding multiple points of marginalization experienced by people of color and those from minority genders. The intersectionality of African American female counselor educators is where additional difficulties lie: the double-bind perspective of both race and gender (Diggs et al., 2009; Gillborn, 2015; Bright et al., 2016). This concept of intersectionality speaks to the idea that multiple points of inequality can interrelate (Bright et al., 2016; Gillborn, 2015). African American women are the

manifestation of this interrelation: gender and race. They are minoritized as people of color and as women (Crenshaw, 1989; Ferguson, 2017; Gillborn, 2015). CRT speaks to this array.

Feminist theory, while not only about women, focuses on equality and justice and uses interdisciplinary tools for scholarship and activism in academia (Ferguson, 2017). Because feminist theory views the world intersectionally as well as interdisciplinarily, as a partner with CRT, these theories, together, could explore the phenomenon of African American female counselor educators holistically from perspectives of race, gender, and existence in academia. CRT and feminist theory together make up the theoretical framework of this study and address equity and equality in recruitment and retention of African American women because singularly, they are ineffective due to the intersecting existence and experiences of the Black woman (Airen, 2017; Crenshaw, 1989; Turner et al., 2008).

While CRT and feminist theory address external barriers, Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise speaks to internal barriers. According to Gottfredson, vocational stereotypes, careers minorities believe they may or may not be suited for, may be internalized and thereby constrict their perceptions about suitable career options (as cited in Brown & Lent, 2013). If this dynamic is at work, internal barriers may be as detrimental as external ones in career ambitions (Speight, 2007). Gottfredson's theory hypothesizes that boys and girls alike, starting very young, understand careers to be suited for girls or boys but not both. Careers are also seen as prestigious or not; therefore, many career choices are based upon these notions (Brown & Lent, 2013). A question tainted by internalized racial oppression may be: Is the professorate appropriate for African American women? This theoretical framework may be instrumental in addressing internalized racial oppression, power differentials, gender appropriateness, etc., as they relate to career aspirations including the professorate.

### Definition of Terms

Key terms that facilitate further understanding of ideas expressed in this scholarly work include:

*Academy / academe* – Used interchangeably to indicate institutions of higher learning (universities or colleges; Turner et al., 2008).

*Black* – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Kena et al., 2016).

*Black ceiling* – While the term scarcely appears in the literature, according to McGirt (2017), this concept suggests that African American women face concrete (solid) obstacles as opposed to more fragile (glass) ones.

*Critical race theory (CRT)* – The idea that race is socially constructed, and that racial difference is invented, perpetuated, and reinforced by society (Gillborn, 2015).

*Faculty of color* – Those designated as underrepresented minorities and those subject to minority status or discrimination (Levin et al., 2013).

*Feminist theory* – A theory focused on equality and justice that promotes the use of interdisciplinary tools for scholarship and activism in academia (Ferguson, 2017).

*Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise* – Emphasizes conditions that may constrain career choices, such as the perceived sex appropriateness, context, power differentials, and prestige associated with various career choices (Brown & Lent, 2013).

*Internalized racial oppression* – The idea that people of color have accepted some aspects of racism, self-degradation, and self-alienation as true (Watts-Jones, 2002).

*Intersectionality* - Speaks to the idea that multiple points of inequality can inter-relate (Bright et al., 2016; Gillborn, 2015).

*Marginalized* – When members of minoritized groups are positioned outside of the flow of power (Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

*Minoritized* – Individuals are rendered minorities in U.S. social institutions because underrepresentation and subordination are socially constructed, with colleges and universities being no exception (Harper, 2012).

*Photovoice* – A qualitative method which positions participants as both participants and coresearchers by asking them to photograph their own points of view (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017).

*Sociocultural adaptation* – An ability to “fit in” to acquire culturally appropriate skills and to negotiate interactive aspects of an environment; ability to negotiate social demands in a new cultural environment (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

*Underrepresentation* – Occurs when the percentage of faculty from a specific racial group is lower than that group’s percentage of the general population (Turner et al., 1999). Underrepresented faculty are those who identify with populations that are not considered majority identities or that have historically been less visible (e.g., women, ethnic/racial minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) in academic positions (Cartwright et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2008).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

It is impossible for a qualitative research project to be developed without assumptions regarded as true by the researcher that permeate throughout the researcher’s work (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The assumptions which lie behind this work are as follows.

Racism, stereotyping, discrimination, and oppression are facts in the lives of minorities, in this context, African American women in the counselor education professorate (Baggerly et al., 2017). The unjust treatment of this group as the result of racism, stereotyping, discrimination,



and oppression are believed, by this researcher, to be at the core of many inequalities suffered by this group in the academy.

Despite the fact that the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission was established in 1991 to investigate barriers against women and minorities (Gamble & Turner, 2015), it is the belief of this researcher that a Black ceiling exists that hinders African American women from advancing due to their status of being double outsiders: women and Black (Beckwith et al., 2016; McGirt, 2017).

While minority faculty members are considered to be underrepresented in relation to the student population, it is additionally believed they are underrepresented in relation to Caucasian/White faculty (see Appendix D; CACREP, 2017; Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011–2012). The CACREP 2017 vital statistics report states that 14.52% of CACREP faculty are African American, while 71.38% are Caucasian/White faculty (CACREP, 2017; see Appendix D). There is no insinuation that other populations are not also underrepresented; the assumption is that all races can benefit from the education provided by diverse faculty (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002).

Speight (2007) described racism as being as integral (ingrained) in America as “the water we swim in or the air we breathe” (p. 127). Privilege sometimes has the same manifestation; many people of privilege cannot detect their own unconscious bias (Chan et al., 2018). The belief underlying this paper is that context is a primary influencer of individual development; therefore, understanding of privilege and oppression may be tainted for those who continuously benefited from it throughout their development (Chan et al., 2018).

While freedom of speech and expression are acknowledged and valued in the United States, minimal attention has been given to views which historically minoritize marginalized

groups, including views based on untenable arguments such as bigotry, hatred, or intolerance for diversity. The author's belief is that diversity is crucial and that it is the responsibility of educators to engage fully with students, socially, politically, and with their values and beliefs (Moses, 2017).

Finally, as the primary researcher, I identify as an African American woman in the counselor education discipline as a doctoral student desiring to enter the academy. My social position (my gender and race) has caused me to be personally impacted by racism, oppression, discrimination, and stereotyping (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I believe these acts are shared by African American women in and out of the academy. I have faith that my researcher bias has allowed me to bring more awareness of the key issues mentioned to this research and to acknowledge their continued prevalence in the lives of faculty who are African American women.

Qualitative research is used to uncover richness in the lived experiences of others (Bernard et al., 2017), and phenomenology is used to explore those lived experiences and describe them with depth and meaning (Hays & Wood, 2011). Because this research focuses only on African American women, qualitative research is best for the purpose of uncovering treasured experiences of the research participants. Qualitative research is rich in the sheer truths explicated, its goal is not generalizability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), but its ability to expound on experiences of individuals and groups and their underlying meanings (Hannon et al., 2016). Because participants of this study are all African American women in the CES professorate, there is no expectation that results would generalize to all women, all African American women, all African Americans, all professors, or all minorities. Limitations in any study are unavoidable due to the fact that not no study can apply to all people at all times (Creswell & Poth, 2018;

Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It is expected, however, that results, although limited to a particular group, will add to the understanding of the plight of African American women in the CES professorate and further elaborate on the need for diversification in this discipline. An additional limitation in this study relates to the requirement in qualitative research to study a phenomenon in the world in which it naturally exists; however, this study was based upon retrospective interviewing outside of the organic space. Therefore, this requirement was not met (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

### **Significance of the Study**

The aim of this research is to contribute significantly to the academy and the fields of counselor education and counseling. The focus of the research is the underrepresentation of African American women in the CES professorate, the challenges their underrepresentation facilitates, those affected by their underrepresentation, and the benefits of their underrepresentation being reversed. While there is literature concerning women and minorities in academia, the research specific to African American women in the CES professorate is lacking. This research is significant because it will illuminate issues relating to this underrepresentation and increase awareness of the systemic challenges and multiple influences that impact the representation of African American women in the academy (Weinberg, 2008). A primary challenge related to the underrepresentation of African American female faculty is the attrition rate of minority students, often the result of a lack of minority mentors (DeWitz et al., 2009; Di Pierro, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014). Additional challenges include those experienced by stakeholders: institutional leaders burdened with student and faculty attrition, students who could benefit from the robust education offered by diverse counselor educators, and counseling clients who might also benefit from a well-educated, culturally competent counselor. The reversal of a

homogeneous workforce is beneficial in creating a robust learning environment that produces world changers and standards bearers (Moses, 2017; Springer & Westerhaus, 2006; Weinberg, 2008). Investigating this underrepresentation and those African American women who have persisted in the academy despite the challenges may uncover characteristics or techniques that offer prescriptive information valuable for cultivating faculty diversity.

Educational institutions are designed for and catered to educational beneficiaries of the day, which have historically been white males (Parker, 2015). At the same time, African American women have been affected by historical, political, and individual struggles (Hannon et al., 2016). As the demographics of educational institutions are changing and current beneficiaries are multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial, a shift in mindset concerning who an academic is needs to take place for those new beneficiaries, which should include new strategies for comprehensive teaching (Parker, 2015). This research offers strategies to challenge the antique status quo and mitigate its effects.

Academia helps shape the minds of those who rule. Barriers experienced by African American women in the academy negatively impact every aspect of society, and academia is not immune to this (Coleman, 2005). Just as the environment recognizes the need for diversity (biodiversity; Weinberg, 2008), academia should as well, and keeping this discourse ongoing is expected to facilitate change.

### **Organization of Dissertation**

This doctoral dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One is an introduction to the problem of the underrepresentation of African American women in the CES professorate, and Chapter Two provides a review of the literature concerning African American women in academia. Chapter Three describes the methodology used to explore the stated problem, Chapter

Four presents the findings of the qualitative study completed to explore the stated problem, and Chapter Five is a comprehensive discussion of findings.

### **Summary**

This chapter explored the underrepresentation of African American women in the CES professorate. The overview highlighted the demographic breakdown of the United States and emphasizes the racial shift responsible for the rich diversity currently experienced across the country, including in educational institutions. Further, the chapter focused on the challenges of changing the racial makeup of the professorate (racism, oppression, discrimination, stereotyping) and highlights the need for diverse counselor educators and counselors to meet the needs of an evolving population. The history of African American women and the internal and external barriers affecting their persistence in the professorate were examined. The foundation was laid to explore the research question, “What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors’ experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?”

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of research, in addition to increasing understanding, should center on identifying concepts that can facilitate improvement and progress. Understanding the concept of the underrepresentation of African American women in the CES professorate is insufficient in isolation; endeavoring to facilitate improvement and progress toward change should be the objective. The literature addressing this concept not only highlighted the outcomes of either underrepresentation or persistence but addressed both the internal and external barriers affecting the outcome along with the meanings these concepts have held for diverse individuals. Because meaning and action intermingle, individuals bestow meanings upon things, and inevitably, the reaction they have toward those things is based upon the meaning they hold for them personally (Smith, 2015). Most of the literature presented in this review feature this dynamic within predominantly white institutions (PWIs), as demonstrated by their propensity to highlight issues of “other” and/or solo status (numeric minority) of the participants of the studies.

For this literature review, the focus was on African American women in the professorate with attention given to CES when available. The search of the literature was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles due to their strict standards on subject matter quality; however, many additional secondary articles and books complemented this search. After articles were obtained, abstracts were thoroughly read to ensure applicability to the topic. Additional searches were conducted on the themes and subthemes from the articles, and references from these sources were additionally reviewed for other helpful resources. The strategy employed to conduct the literature review included searching the PsycINFO\* database through Liberty University’s APA PsycNET platform for the terms “education,” “women in education,” “African Americans in

education,” “African American women in education,” “women in academia,” “African American women in academia,” “African American women in the professorate,” “women in counselor education and supervision,” “African American women in counselor education and supervision,” and “counselor education and supervision.”

The concepts of education, women in education, African Americans in education, and African American women in education are commonly discussed in the literature. While African American women in the professorate may not be as well discussed in the literature, they are not completely overlooked. However, they are potentially misunderstood, and the problems expressed are regularly recurring and largely unsolved. The problems discussed in the literature concerning African American women in higher education, among many, include discrimination, oppression, racism, stereotyping, and underrepresentation (Baggerly et al., 2017). These problems facilitate an underrepresentation of diverse cultures, which creates homogeneity. Problematically, homogenous faculty fails to represent diversity of thought, creates groupthink, and disallows a robust exchange of ideas (Moses, 2017; Springer & Westerhaus, 2006). The concept of underrepresentation of African American women in the CES professorate is far from an uncomplicated issue; if it were uncomplicated, no doubt, it would have already been solved.

This literature review additionally clarifies the need for research focused on this topic largely because it touches every area of counselor education: counseling and its need to be both ethically and culturally executed for all counselees, including diverse populations; supervision because it is the gatekeeping arm of counselor education; teaching because it affords the opportunity for faculty to mentor up-and-coming professionals, research and scholarship because, as was mentioned earlier, it allows for improvement and progress; and finally

leadership and advocacy because it is through these avenues the issues presented in this paper can finally be eradicated (CACREP, 2015).

The research concerning African American women in the professorate presents multiple themes that are intricate and chronic. The following literature review illuminates these prolonged issues in an attempt to highlight areas which have not surrendered to the passage of time, scrutiny, or pressure, but have thus far persisted. This literature review covers internal barriers (internalized racial oppression [depression and lowered career aspirations and African American males and students] and values, identity negotiation, and sociocultural adaptation) and external barriers (racism, oppression, discrimination, stereotyping, threats, isolation, lack of visibility, dishonor, difficulty achieving tenure, and lack of mentoring), attraction, recruitment and retention, and persistence and underrepresentation of African American female academic talent.

### **Internal Barriers**

#### **Internalized Racial Oppression**

At the core of oppression are the concepts of immobilization, restriction, and restraint of a marginalized group for the purpose of maintaining an unjust system (Banks & Stephens, 2018). Racism is a form of oppression that can occur at institutional or structural levels and can be defended through policies, procedures, and practices. While ordinarily unconceivable, it is possible for this racism to exist internally to an oppressed and marginalized group/individual as well, and this occurrence is termed “internalized racial oppression.” Some barriers hold individuals (external), but it is also possible that some individuals hold barriers (internal). This phenomenon, in addition to the term “internalized racial oppression,” is sometimes referred to as “internalized racism,” “internalized White supremacy,” “internalized Whiteness,” and “racial self-hatred.” The last of these terms is politically volatile and is not limited to one racial group,



but is evident among many minoritized groups including Asians, Jews, Mexican Americans, Koreans and Vietnamese (Pyke, 2010).

Because of its biological, psychological, and social factors, racism is seen as a biopsychosocial stressor which contributes to a marginalized group's experience of internalized racial oppression (Banks & Stephen, 2018). At its core, internalized racial oppression occurs when negative stereotypes inflicted upon the marginalized go unchallenged and are accepted as truth by the oppressed group or individuals from the oppressed group (Bailey et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2017; Brown & Segrist, 2016; Pyke, 2010). This phenomenon occurs when people of color accept some aspects of racism, self-degradation, or self-alienation (Watts-Jones, 2002). Once pejorative, racist philosophies are internalized concerning one's own race, damaging "anti-self-issues" may develop (Brown et al., 2017). Such internalization may affect self-efficacy and the career values of some African Americans (Brown et al., 2017).

Internalized racial oppression is likened to a form of self-stereotyping, devalued identity, when the oppressed accepts stereotypes of themselves as true (Levin et al., 2013). W. E. B. DuBois (1897) described this dynamic as *double consciousness*, a constant negotiation between who individuals view themselves as versus who others see them as (Levin et al., 2013). The result of opposing stereotypes creates identity conflicts which are in turn avoided when individuals choose identities positively supported by others (Levin et al., 2013). This divided self and depersonalization is particularly problematic for African American females desiring to be a part of the professorate as the battle to persist through constant identity conflicts is equivalent to swimming upstream: achievable, yet arduous (Levin et al., 2013). The extent to which African Americans in the United States may have internalized racial oppression can be measured using the Internalized Racial Oppression Scale (IROS; Bailey et al., 2011). The development and

validation of IROS utilized 98 Black students, ages 18 through 73. Of the participants, 70 attended PWIs and 21 attended historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs; Bailey et al., 2011). The result of Bailey et al.'s (2011) study was the development of the IROS which measured internalized racial oppression for Black individuals and yielded a five-factor solution: belief in biased representation of history (accept skewed historical facts), devaluation of the African worldview and motifs (ideas of harmony with nature and interdependence), internalization of negative stereotypes (belief in negative racial stereotypes about Blacks), self-destructive behaviors (destructive to health and welfare of Black community), and alteration of physical appearance including hair change (to align with White ideas of beauty; Bailey et al., 2011). All elements were identified to some level in the participants of the study.

While this study utilized a small sample size which prohibits making robust declarations, it does, however, facilitate the development of additional tools to better understand this construct (Bailey et al., 2011). The Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale is similar to the IROS and was additionally created to measure internalized racism (Campon & Carter, 2015). The initial study (exploratory and validity analyses) utilized 341 participants (99 Black, 70 multiracial/biracial, 61 Asian/Pacific Islander, 61 Latino/a or Hispanic, 37 Native American, 10 who self-identified as other, and three who gave no answer) ranging in age from 18 to 84 with 256 (75.1%) identifying as female and 277 (81.2%) as heterosexual (Campon & Carter, 2015). The second phase (confirmatory analyses) utilized 315 (distinct from the initial study) participants (80 [25.4%] Black, 68 [21.6%] multiracial/biracial, 56 [17.8%] Asian/Pacific Islander, 54 [17.1%] Latino/a or Hispanic, 40 [12.7%] Native American, 16 [5.1%] who self-identified as other, and one who gave no answer) ranging in age from 18 to 85 with 216 (68.6%) identifying as female and 251 (79.7%) as heterosexual (Campon & Carter, 2015). After an exploratory factor analysis starting

with 70 items, the final 32 items (four factors) yielded from this study were; emotional responses (shame, embarrassment, low self-esteem), American standard of beauty (belief that white culture is superior to minority culture), devaluation of own group (giving credence to harmful stereotypes of own race), and patterns of thinking (denial of existence of discrimination; Campon & Carter, 2015). These elements were apparent in the participants of the study, demonstrating appropriated racial oppression. The development of these tools not only allowed for deeper understanding of this construct, but further allowed for understanding, reframing, and healing from resulting psychological and emotional consequences (Campon & Carter, 2015).

Because internalized racial oppression exists on a continuum and is not simply an either-or phenomenon, it can occur while escaping the awareness of the marginalized group (Bailey et al., 2011). This negative sense of self as not being as worthy as others may go unchallenged because of its unconscious existence (Brown & Segrist, 2016; Speight, 2007). It is often defined as turning upon oneself, one's families, and one's own people (Bailey et al., 2011).

### **Internalization and Depression**

Carr et al. (2014) addressed the link between depression and multiple oppressions (race, gender, sexual objectification) with internalization as mediator. Depression has historically been and continues to be a major health concern, and while women in the United States are twice as likely to experience this leading disability than men, African American women are the most likely to suffer from it due to the experience of oppression (economic, health, housing, etc.; Carr et al., 2014). Sue and Sue (2008) speculated that because of their oppressive experiences, some African American women have feelings of shame and blame themselves and their own perceived inferiority as the cause of such experiences, resulting in the internalization of those oppressive events (Carr et al., 2014).

This information was extracted from a study of a clinical sample of 144 African American women who sought mental health treatment, age 18–72, of whom 109 were heterosexual, 60 had a high school diplomas, 32 had a two-year college degree, 10 had a four-year college degree, 12 had a graduate or professional degree, and four declined to report their level of education (Carr et al., 2014). The income reported was predominately low; 89 reported earning less than \$10,000 annually (Carr et al., 2014). Sexual objectification was measured using the Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale, racist events were measured using Schedule of Racist Events-Recent measure, gendered racism was measured using Racialized Sexual Harassment Scale, coping with oppressive experiences via internalization was assessed with the internalization subscale of the Coping with Discrimination Scale, and depressive symptoms were measured by the Beck Depressive Inventory-II. Coping with oppressive events via internalization mediated the links between both sexual objectification and racist events with depression (Carr et al., 2014). Results suggest experiences of sexual objectification and racial discrimination may limit a low-income African American woman's ability to feel as if she can assert herself, and this can lead to feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, confusion, and self-blame (Carr et al., 2014).

### **Internalization and Career Aspirations**

Problematically, African Americans experience occupational inequality and are overrepresented in lower-paying jobs (Brown & Segrist, 2016). The complexity of this issue suggests this overrepresentation in certain lower-paying jobs may simultaneously facilitate occupational stereotypes. The perpetuation of stereotypes in certain careers/jobs and a lack of role models in certain careers/jobs may contribute to increased and/or decreased aspirations toward certain careers/jobs. According to social cognitive career theory, career aspirations may also include a desire to pursue leadership positions or continued education within a respective

field (Brown & Segrist, 2016). Researchers have identified that contextual factors including gender, racial-ethnic background, and social economic status may serve as a barrier to career development, and that African American youth may develop a career-related internalized oppression that results in lower career aspirations (Brown & Segrist, 2016). Brown and Segrist (2016) and Carr et al. (2014) agree that endorsement of negative racial stereotypes is associated with negative psychological and social outcomes.

Studies point to the negative influence of internalized racial oppression on the career aspirations of African Americans and the possible development of career-related internalized oppression among them (Brown & Segrist, 2016). One study in particular consisted of 315 participants age 18–62 (97.5% Black or African American, 2.2% Biracial, 0.3% other), 66% female, 33% male, 0.6% transgendered (Brown & Segrist, 2016). Career aspirations were measured using the Career Aspiration Scale, and internalized racism was measured using the IROS (Brown & Segrist, 2016). Participants who described valuing connections with their African American heritage, values, and beliefs were increasingly likely to report striving for achievement, leadership roles, and continued education in their occupational field (Brown & Segrist, 2016). Some researchers acknowledge there are sometimes differences between African American men and women concerning these dynamics.

### **Internalization and African American Men and Students**

For men, a lower value of higher education correlated with greater experiences of internal racial oppression, but the same was not true for women (Brown et al., 2017). Reportedly, racial oppression is also an experienced truth for African American students and, in addition to undermining both motivation and aspirations to pursue higher education goals, may also cause increased perception of barriers and lowered perception of rewards in the pursuit of higher

education (Brown et al., 2017). Internalized racial oppression may be embraced and conveyed differently for men and women as the result of racial oppression experienced, and internal and external locus of control (perceived level of control over one's life) correlated to levels of internalized racial oppression reported (Brown et al., 2017).

The study that presented these findings consisted of 156 participants, ages 18–55, of whom 62.8% were women, 96.8% were African American or Black, 37.2% possessed a bachelor's degree or higher, and 62.2% earned less than \$50k annually (Brown et al., 2017). Assessments utilized were the IROS, Higher Education Values Inventory, and Academic Locus of Control Scale. There existed an inverse relationship between internalized racial oppression and the value participants placed on higher education (Brown et al., 2017); higher levels of internalized racial oppression were correlated with less value and importance on higher education; and higher scores on IROS were related to lower scores on the Higher Education Values Inventory (Brown et al., 2017). As internalized racial oppression (for African American men only) increased, academic locus of control became more externalized, and the Academic Locus of Control Scale was an intervening variable in the relationship between scores on the IROS and Higher Education Values Inventory (Brown et al., 2017). Academic locus of control mediated the link between internalized racial oppression and higher education values for African American men, but not women (Brown et al., 2017). Mental health practitioners and educators alike are challenged with remaining diligent and culturally competent when encountering individuals struggling with the concept of internalized racial oppression (Brown et al., 2017).

Additionally, Brooks and Steen (2010) concurred that there is a dearth in African American talent in the CES professorate; however, they focused on the absence of African American male counselor educators (AAMCEs) as more problematic. They purported the issue

to be challenges in the pipeline from high school to college, limiting AAMCEs' numbers in counselor education at advanced levels. Issues addressed by Brooks and Steen (2010) concerning AAMCEs that agree with those evident in the literature concerning African American female counselor educators are limited mentoring, barriers, challenges with promotion and tenure, and unwelcoming work environments (Brooks & Steen, 2010). Issues non-problematic for AAMCEs but apparent in the literature concerning African American females in CES include stereotypes, internalized racial oppression, and increased aggression from white male students. The purpose of Brooks and Steen's (2010) study was to explore AAMCEs' feelings concerning their scarcity in the profession, and the study utilized a sample of 12 AAMCEs (tenured or seeking tenure) who responded to questions during a semi-structured interview with three revealed themes: academic life is flexible yet unfulfilling, opportunities to do meaningful work, and concerns for recruitment and retention of AAMCEs (Brooks & Steen, 2010). Brooks and Steen (2010) asserted recruitment and retention of AAMCEs is hindered by their grim showing in the pipeline. African American females are in the pipeline but are hindered in attraction, recruitment, and retention in the professorate.

Similarly to Brooks and Steen (2010), Glenn and Johnson (2012) identified challenges of Black men attending PWIs which mimic the challenges of black men as counselor educators: a lack of financial resources, weak support systems, and negative classroom experiences. The concept of internalized racial oppression, which was absent from Brooks and Steen's (2010) study, was mentioned as a challenge by Glenn and Johnson (2012). Using a phenomenological approach and cocultural theory, the researchers uncovered themes concerning the African American male students' communication strategies suggesting they utilize aggressive assimilation (negotiating stereotypes and self-identity), nonassertive separation (negotiating

marginalization and power imbalances), and desire for accommodation (communication strategy impediments; Glenn & Johnson, 2012). Glenn and Johnson's (2012) study strays from the topic of this paper but warrants inclusion as it highlights the commonalities of challenges for people of color, males or females, students or professors in academic settings.

Griffin et al. (2014), in a counterstorytelling piece, also addressed the challenges of African American men in academia. A counterstory is a parable, chronicle, or fictional narrative that centers the experiences of minoritized communities and individuals in order to challenge "writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 159). In this counterstory, Dr. Timesnow questions why his efforts are not valued when it relates to his research, teaching, and service and why his colleagues do not understand why he mentors when it takes so much time and interferes with publishing and working toward tenure (Griffin et al., 2014). It is apparent that there is a differing value system at work in this case as is often the case with some African American women. There is an overrepresentation of African Americans in traditional social service occupations, which may be the result of the Africentric value of collaboration and community, particularly for African American women (Witherspoon & Speight, 2009).

### **Values**

African American women often value home above career and see home as a place of refuge from the mistreatment from society, not as a place of oppression as many feminists suggest (Harley, 2008). Unfortunately, a requirement for many faculty positions is relocation, and this condition threatens the safety developed by being close to home (Harley, 2008). It was found that the traditional role of women was as family caregivers for children as well as for elderly parents (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). Tradition and values are often



interconnected, affecting one another almost seamlessly. “If this research is an accurate assessment of women in the workforce, then women of all colors and academic rank more often than men put family first and sometimes do not seek leadership roles” (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014, p. 290). Challenging an internal value or longstanding tradition may be too difficult for some to do. Many find themselves feeling torn internally (psychologically divided) between their personal and professional selves, and because of internal values, the first choice is driven by personal forces while career advancement is put second (Turner, 2002).

These internal values facilitate internal barriers which are defined as those dynamics internally self-imposed by individuals as opposed to dynamics externally superimposed by outside forces, including individuals. In the United States, males have outnumbered females in the professorate since the 19th century (Parker, 2015). The reasons for this may be internally self-imposed in addition to being externally superimposed and could include personal value systems, namely women’s desires to remain more available to family (gendered role expectations; Pittman, 2010), lack of interest in male-dominated fields, or intolerance for being oppressed or discriminated against (Parker, 2015). Gamble and Turner (2015) identified a thought-provoking scenario including divergent goals and motivations of African American female college students from those of White female students. It was found that African American women demonstrated a propensity toward being mothers and wives (nurturers; Pittman, 2010), and Caucasian women toward personal career development (Gamble & Turner, 2015). This value may contribute to African American women’s representation in higher education being muted, stagnated, and/or underrepresented (Allison, 2008).

While there have been tremendous gains in education for African Americans, there continues to be choice towards a narrow range of occupations often the result of gender and self-

efficacy beliefs (Witherspoon & Speight, 2009). Career patterns for many African Americans are affected by race, ethnicity, and gender with an apparent relationship among Africentric values, discrimination, career interest, and self-efficacy beliefs (Witherspoon & Speight, 2009). “Yet there is no research examining the role that values such as uplifting one’s people, unity, and collectivism play in career decision making” (Witherspoon & Speight, 2009, p. 891), which may be needful for a community of people so rooted in tradition and values. Witherspoon and Speight’s (2009) study utilizing a sample of 129 African American college students ages 16–70, (53 at a midwestern state university, 76 at junior/community college, 30 male, 99 female) found that the most frequently listed major (and career goal) was education, and the second most common was social sciences (Witherspoon & Speight, 2009).

This study sought to determine if African self-consciousness is related to career beliefs in African Americans. The researchers desired to understand the relationship among one’s level of commitment to African American culture, one’s experiences with racism, and one’s self-efficacy beliefs to expressed interest in traditional and nontraditional occupations (Witherspoon & Speight, 2009). The results indicate that men expressed less affinity for traditional occupations than women, and women’s self-efficacy, in relation to traditional occupations and interests, moved in a positive direction, whereas the relationship between self-efficacy for nontraditional occupations and interest in nontraditional occupations moved in an inverse direction (Witherspoon & Speight, 2009).

In addition to a simple Demographic Information Questionnaire to gain participant information, the measures used to determine this information was an Occupational Self-Efficacy assessment (which measured participants’ level of self-efficacy for 10 traditional and 10 nontraditional occupations for African Americans), Occupational Interest Scale (which rated

interest in traditional and nontraditional occupations for African Americans), African Self-Consciousness Scale (which measured the level of commitment to African American culture), and Schedule of Racist Events (which assessed racial discrimination; Witherspoon & Speight, 2009). Gender was highly predictive of interest in traditional occupations, with “African American women expressing higher levels of interest in traditional occupations than African American men” (Witherspoon & Speight, 2009, p. 898). While being both similar and different simultaneously, Black male and Black female faculty have similar and different experiences at the intersection of race and gender (Harris, 2012). These similarities and differences must be negotiated in a way that is authentic to the possessor of them, or the result can be the development of a double consciousness.

### **Identity Negotiation and Sociocultural Adaptation**

A staple of negotiation is agreement and compromise. Individuals sometimes rely on contracts to ensure all members involved in a negotiation are fairly represented. As such, the negotiation involving African Americans in academia at PWIs often consists of cultural contracts (Allison, 2008). The negotiation typically entails the manifestation of culture: How should Blackness be exhibited? This idea of sociocultural adaptation insinuates behavior change and at times identity negotiation. When the identity negotiation is comprehensively agreed upon, synergy results. When sociocultural adaptation ignores well-being, individuals are forced to accept the terms of the cultural contract, resulting in a double consciousness, depersonalization, or divided self (Levin et al., 2013). One concept of identity negotiation is code switching; compartmentalized ways of being (Allison, 2008; Diggs et al., 2009; Levin et al., 2013). One study involving 16 Black faculty, male and female, investigated the extent African American professors at PWIs negotiate their identities through code switching and other ways. One

participant reported code switching but found it less passionate, more indirect and removed, and just lucid; another participant reported historically operating under a double consciousness, but insisted he no longer does, but skillfully uses differing communication styles while not altering or masking (Allison, 2008). Allison (2008) characterized these concepts as resiliency of Blackness and asserts that while African American professors have not grown by leaps and bounds, they have persisted, and that is the win.

While the concepts of internalized racial oppression, values, and sociocultural adaptation may be problematic in the lives of African American faculty (male or female) at PWIs, those internal barriers are subject to the faculty members themselves. It is when external barriers impinge on the lives, careers, and desires, of African American faculty that forces become superimposed upon the faculty. Legal, social, and psychological inequalities experienced by many African Americans are the result of current social conditioning and are at the root of external barriers (Brown et al., 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

### **External Barriers**

As mentioned, external barriers are those things not in the control of the individuals they affect, but are outside of their influence or control, but nonetheless interfere with them reaching their goals. In the United States the unique philosophy of life (worldview) of most culturally diverse peoples is often connected to painful experiences, particularly racism and oppression, given the history of oppression as the result of slavery (Bradley, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2008). Systemic oppression restricts, restrains, and immobilizes a nondominant group, while systemic racism maintains the dominance of any group and can exist institutionally and/or structurally (Banks & Stephens, 2018). Racism is not a simple one-time event, but a chronic process and an

insidious condition that violates its victims holistically: physically, socially, spiritually, materially and psychologically (Brown et al., 2017; Speight, 2007).

## **Racism**

External barriers, or superimposed ceilings, could include obstacles such as racism, oppression, and discrimination (Solorzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). Racism, in the simplest terms, is defined as discrimination against one's race mainly through beliefs (thoughts), while elite racism disallows minority worldviews in academia (Coleman, 2005). Regularly perpetuated through unconscious abstract contexts, racial microaggressions are a common form of racism experienced by people of color, with faculty of color in higher education being no exception (Constantine et al., 2008). Racial microaggressions include not only subtle verbal assaults, but behavioral and/or environmental indignities that communicate belittling messages to people of color (Constantine, 2007; Constantine et al., 2008). Due to microaggressions' clandestine and sometimes insidious manifestation, versus the pre-civil rights era racism which was blatant and hostile, this contemporary racism is minimized (Constantine et al., 2008). Many challenge the idea of present-day racism because perpetrators seem unlike the hateful bigot or moral degenerate (Harley, 2008), but when all forms of racism, contemporary as well as historical, are examined, named, and challenged, survivors of racism can find their voices (Solorzano et al., 2000). One study conducted by Solorzano et al. (2000) with 34 African American students (18 females, 16 males) at three elite PWIs emphasized the experiences African American students had with racial microaggressions. This study utilized a critical race framework in an attempt to explore connection between four elements: racial stereotypes, campus racial climate, academic performance, and cumulative racial microaggressions (Solorzano et al., 2000). The seven areas of inquiry were: types of racial discrimination, student

response to racial discrimination, effects of racial discrimination on students, advantages of critical mass of African American students, assessment of racial climate increase or decrease, participants recommendations to other African American students, and future study recommendations (Solorzano et al., 2000).

The experiences of these students demonstrates [sic] that even at high levels of accomplishment (i.e., at elite undergraduate universities), where educational conditions might on the surface appear to be equal, inequality and discrimination still exist—albeit in more subtle and hidden forms. (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 71)

The shared themes were commonality of racial microaggressions in academic spaces inside and outside of classrooms, including insults; microaggressions facilitating feelings of self-doubt, frustration, and isolation; and feeling the necessity to create counter-space (subculture or safe space; Solorzano et al., 2000). Racism is an ordinary occurrence for faculty of color, and it is from their perspective that the fight against institutional racism must begin starting by acknowledging that the social construct of race has historically shaped university structures, policies, practices, and discourses for students as well as for faculty (Yosso et al., 2009). This sinister barrier produces oppressions, discriminations, and stereotypes.

### **Oppression**

Oppression can be both systemically and individually upheld. Because women faculty of color in higher education are from oppressed groups, they may be systemically oppressed in the classroom, which weakens their effectiveness as teachers and encumbers their emotional well-being. Oppression hinders growth, creativity, and freedom, and while incidences may be discreet, the ramifications are widespread (Pittman, 2010). Pittman's (2010) study, through interviews with 17 African American women faculty at PWIs, revealed three main themes

concerning the space the faculty shared with students. White male students acted in ways that felt threatening and intimidating by: (a) opposing their authority in the classroom, (b) questioning their instruction, and (c) disrespecting them intellectually. Additionally, the interviewed revealed concerns being called by first name in the classroom while white male colleagues were called by their title (Pittman, 2010). The women in Pittman's study reported awareness of their locational and intersectional placement of race and gender in the matrix of domination and reported feeling oppressed as a result (Collins, 2000; Pittman, 2010). Pittman (2010) proposed that minoritized faculty, particularly women, were often subjected to classroom oppression.

Women excel in skills but are often disadvantaged (oppressed) in their ability to acquire positions despite the fact that they are well qualified (Beckwith et al., 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). This is a reality that affects women in general, but women of color experience additional challenges. Women positioned intersectionally by race and gender often experience gendered racism (racist sexism) which causes double exclusion: one by race, the other by gender (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002; Collins, 2000; Pittman, 2010). This double disadvantage creates an external barrier doubly reinforced (Beckwith et al., 2016). Because Black women experience multiple marginalities (Ford, 2011) in the academy, they are constantly negotiating which lens to filter experiences through: race, gender, etc. (Harris, 2012).

Airen (2017) used the term "color ceiling" to refer to barriers that obstruct financial and employment equity, and Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) used the term "concrete wall" to refer to thicker barriers experienced by women of color due to their multiple marginality, while McGirt (2017) identified this same concept as a "Black ceiling," and Hyun (2005) addressed *bamboo ceilings*, which are considered to affect those of Asian descent. This form of sexist oppression is well noted, but according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), African

Americans are the most likely to be oppressed, experiencing unemployment, underemployment, and seasonal employment across the board (Chaney, 2014). If these outcomes are the result of unjust treatment, they are branded as discrimination.

### **Discrimination**

Although discrimination is not unjust treatment distinct only to women, according to Hurtado et al. (2012), in academia it is reported twice as often by women as men (Haskins et al., 2016). Academic institutions, like all institutions, are responsible for producing, facilitating, and ensuring equality and just treatment for all (Hurtado et al., 2012). Haskins et al. (2016) used a transcendental phenomenological approach to investigate the lived experiences of African American “mother” counselor educators. Demographic questionnaires and interviews ensured participants identified as African American, tenure-track counselor educators, and mothers of at least one minor dependent residing in the home. After following Moustakas’s 1994 research process (epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesizing meaning) during the data collection and analysis process, the six themes which emerged from the eight participants included race

- (a) makes you susceptible to racialized marginalization [feeling “excluded,” “isolated”],
- (b) precipitates professional strain and neglect [“mothering caused scholarship to decline”], (c) creates internalized success [“pride in sticking with it”], (d) brings mothering into scholarship and pedagogy [“infused their mother identity”], (e) affects work life balance [“flexibility,” “self-care”], and (f) necessitates support structures [“village philosophy”]. (Haskins et al., 2016, pp. 65–66)

Participants reported experiencing challenges at the intersections of African American, woman, mother, and faculty (Haskins et al., 2016). With multiple marginalities at work, it is sometimes



difficult to accurately determine at what point inequalities occur. An exhaustive understanding of discrimination is imperative due to the fact that discriminatory acts continue to occur, but the lived experiences of the privileged are vastly different from those of the marginalized. and without scrutiny, these acts may be minimized and overlooked (Harris, 2012). Barriers faced by African American faculty are multifaceted and include historical, cultural, and social injustices (Allen et al., 2000). These barriers not only contribute to continuing discrimination and educational inequity, but to the underrepresentation of African American faculty (Allen et al., 2000). A primary reason discrimination in the United States particularly is intolerable, colleges and universities notwithstanding, relates to its amplified diversification, and educators need to ultimately shoulder the responsibility to become standard bearers and manifest successful transition into a multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial world (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). Indicative of the aforementioned diversification is the reality of women obtaining higher education degrees, but still more men versus women occupying high-ranked faculty positions (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). When classroom environments are welcoming, supportive, and accepting of female faculty of color, further faculty diversity is nurtured (Pittman, 2010). Internal and external barriers hinder this process, and the fostering of stereotypes of African American women is equally challenging.

### **Stereotyping**

It is difficult to stand in confidence and mastery in front of any audience, including a classroom, when negative derogatory images intrude into one's consciousness, creating a divided self or double consciousness (Levin et al., 2013). Concerning African American women in the professorate, this phenomenon of double consciousness is the result of them seeing themselves one way while some others do not share that vision. African American female counselor

educators are similar to other female faculty in that they are often challenged by sexism, tenure, promotion, work-life balance, and the glass ceiling, but unlike other female counselor educators, African American female counselors are additionally challenged with racism and colorism, historical stereotypes, and the black ceiling (Bryant et al., 2005). Black women have to negotiate “femaleness and Blackness” (Pittman, 2010, p. 186) along with stereotypical roles of the nurturing Mammy (faithful, obedient, self-sacrificing, domestic, subordinate; Allison, 2008; Bradley, 2005; Collins, 2000; Harley, 2008; Ortego-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014; West, 1995), or the Sapphire (loud, animated, irresponsible, untrustworthy, strong-willed; West, 1995), while they are trying to solidify the reputation of an academic (Bryant et al., 2005; Pittman, 2010). According to the Harley (2008), African American female faculty are often deprivileged at PWIs and seen stereotypically. Narratives like the following are all too common:

I am a Sapphire not because I choose to be or because I actually am. I am a Sapphire because of an inflexible characterization about Black women that concludes that I am angry, threatening, and unintelligent. As a Sapphire, I am not regarded as entirely unintelligent, but intelligent enough to use my wit in angry and threatening ways. My status and effectiveness as a law professor and my potential career opportunities are diminished by my identity as a Black woman, i.e., as a Sapphire. (Bradley, 2005, p. 520)

Chimamanda Adichie, in her 2009 TED Talk, discussed stereotypes as problematic not simply because they are untrue, but because they are incomplete. They paint a single story starting from a set point but do not include the entire story to give context and necessary framework (Adichie, 2009). If the story of Mammy does not include her motivation to survive for her progeny, then her persona appears weak. Bradley (2005) added to this dialogue by highlighting that historically the Mammy persona was rooted in slavery, and she served as the

always happy, ready-to-soothe, primary caretaker of the master's home. Langston Hughes (1921) added to this single story when he depicted her true motivation in his poem "The Negro Mother." African American women, faculty included, are often tasked with managing these diametrically opposed stereotypes while being regularly branded as one or the other of them (Bradley, 2005; Bryant et al., 2005; Pittman, 2010; West, 1995). The goal for female faculty of color is to not acquiesce and accept another's view of them as truth, but instead to incorporate aspects of the stereotype and reframe them as beneficial (Banks & Stephens, 2018; Pyke, 2010). In this aspect the stereotype need not be internalized, but appropriated; the stereotype of Sapphire becomes an archetype of strength, resilience, or grit, as opposed to the negative nagging stereotype accepted by some other oppressive view (Banks & Stephens, 2018; Bradley, 2005; Duckworth, 2016; Harley, 2008; Pyke, 2010). This challenge to the historical image of who an academic should be makes allowance for something historically considered strange and unusual to now become a part of the fabric of the new academic (Dowdy, 2008).

Bryant et al. (2005) presented the voices of seven unidentified African American female counselor educators, and the sentiment was clear that while African American women are increasing in teaching positions in counselor education, they are still sparse due to their position intersectionally: Black and female. Bryant et al. (2005) reported one of the participants stated combating historical stereotypes like Mammy, Sapphire, and overachiever was particularly challenging. One participant stated this historic role facilitated her being treated as a capable maternal figure void of any needs, wants, or desires of her own particularly concerning her own professional growth or achievement. Additionally, the *Amos 'n' Andy* show spurred the development of the Sapphire character, which facilitated the phrase "the angry Black woman" (Bryant et al., 2005, p. 314; West, 1995). Internalization of the Sapphire persona may result in

behavior modification; acting more like Mammy. One of the participants identified with the overachiever image which plagues middle-class professional African American women expected to serve on multiple committees as mentors and preceptors (Bryant et al., 2005).

One African American female professional, after being given an inferior rating, was told that several coworkers perceived her as intimidating and difficult (Bradley, 2005). She attributed this to fact that she did not embody the warmth of Mammy. She reported, “I was there to do a job, but I was being rated on how comfortable I made Whites I worked with feel” (Bradley, 2005, p. 520). Among these common demeaning stereotypes that still exist are the label of the minimal intellectual prowess of Blacks (Allison, 2008), and the label (stereotype) of African American women as less proficient, capable, or competent than men (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). Stereotyping and predetermined prejudiced beliefs regarding women lead the causes of women being blocked in institutions of higher learning from achieving senior management positions (Gamble & Turner, 2015) and greatly contribute to the dynamic of race fatigue and feeling emotionally stretched to serve in multiple capacities (e.g., community service, mentorship), yet simultaneously feeling unappreciated (Harley, 2008).

### **Stereotype Threat**

When marginalized individuals anticipate being stereotyped (stereotyped threat), they may anticipatorily react, and, as a result, job placement, promotion, and earning are affected (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). African Americans and women are particularly sensitive to stereotyped threat, and a further complication results when they disengage as a strategy to protect their personal standing and avoid confirming stereotypes, which may further confirm these stereotypes for some (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). Fear of being negatively stereotyped depresses

the performance, motivation, interest, and ambition of stigmatized individuals (Emerson & Murphy, 2015).

Emerson and Murphy (2015) identified that both underrepresented and/or historically stereotyped women reported mistrust of companies/organizations that held stereotypical views of them, which facilitated defensive behavior from the stereotyped. Three studies investigated if a fixed versus pliable organizational lay theory facilitates trust for the marginalized. African Americans reported high levels of trust when organizations asserted a value-diversity philosophy (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). Study one revealed organizations that held a performance-oriented, intelligence, best instincts, and ideas philosophy versus a growth-oriented, hard-working, passion, and creativity philosophy garnered less trust from participants (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). Study two hypothesized that organizational lay theories of intelligence (entity/fixed, incremental/malleable) are a hint to stereotyped threat and revealed that women's expectations of threat facilitated trust/mistrust (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). In study three, as hypothesized, men and women trusted companies that focused more on the development process than the performance. This study shows the concern of women being viewed through negative stereotypes (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). These dynamics may prevent minority women from excelling in their chosen profession.

One question asked by Ortega-Liston and Rodriguez Soto (2014) concerning minority women in the professorate was, "Are Hispanic, Black, and Asian women professors keeping pace with White professors?" (p. 287). The literature review revealed this answer to be no, they are not keeping pace with White professors in terms of promotion and/or tenure but are advancing at much slower rates. The researchers also asked, "Are women, as a group, keeping pace with their male counterparts?" (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014, p. 287). The answer

to this question was yes; a little less than half of all postsecondary teachers are women, but this statistic includes Caucasian women as well, not just minority women. The third question asked by Ortega-Liston and Rodriguez Soto (2014) was, “What obstacles, if any, must women overcome to succeed in their chosen professions?” (p. 287). The researchers reviewed more than 50 qualitative and quantitative studies and identified the challenges as isolation, minimal mentoring, discrimination, and tokenism, and many scholars reported participation in service-related committees (race-related) as a requirement versus as particular desire (Ortega-Liston & Soto, 2014; Pittman, 2010; Turner et al., 2008). A sense of underrepresentation is easily recognized given that Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians comprise 18.9% of postsecondary teachers, and non-Hispanic Whites comprise 81.1% (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). This sense of underrepresentation often facilitates a sense of isolation, a potential for nominal mentoring from those similarly intersectioned by race and gender, and visibility issues (invisibility, hypervisibility, and overvisibility).

### **Isolation**

The pattern of isolation, alienation, and marginalization is not a new phenomenon but has persisted from decade to decade (Allen et al., 2000; Davis, 1999; Griffin, 2016; Harris, 2012; James & Farmer, 1993). African American students’ challenges included campus-wide internalized oppression which facilitated isolation, estrangement, and alienation (Glenn & Johnson, 2012; Hannon et al., 2016). In many cases, for both African American students and professors, these challenges with isolation, given this population’s scarcity in academia, may spur socialization challenges (Jones & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). Clark (1987) and Corcoran and Clark (1984) and addressed socialization and its role in academe, defining it as the process individuals advance through to become part of a group, organization, or community (Austin,

2002). Socialization into the professorate does not begin when a neophyte professor begins employment, but instead it begins in graduate school where questions asked are: Can I do this? Do I want to do this? Do I belong? (Austin, 2002). The processing of these questions alone can trigger feelings of isolation. Socialization is a dynamic, ongoing process in which organizations affect and influence newcomers and are simultaneously affected and influenced by them (Austin, 2002; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). According to studies of faculty newcomers, because they perceive a lack of companionship between colleagues, they are isolated, and many consider leaving the professorate (Austin, 2002). There is a process of observing, listening, and interacting with faculty as graduate students, and then when the individual becomes faculty, with peers, but a sense of isolation hinders and interrupts this process (Austin, 2002; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Once members of the academy, some researchers have reported African Americans acknowledging feelings of isolation and marginalization in their departments (Brooks & Steen, 2010; Turner et al., 1999). The concept of isolation persists from graduate students to the professorate; it is therefore conceivable that African American students who persist to the professorate transfer feelings of isolation from one to another. The reason for such isolation is diverse, but one concerning reason, reported by Allison (2008), is the fear many African Americans in the professorate have of being allied to one another; trying to protect their own unstable careers creates this fear of socialization within race.

### **Invisibility and Overvisibility/Hypervisibility**

Moreover, the literature addresses additional challenges for African American female counselor educators that include issues of invisibility, overvisibility/hypervisibility, and categorization as raced, gendered, and othered in predominantly White learning institutions (Cartwright et al., 2009; Chang et al., 2013; Constantine et al., 2008; Ford, 2011; Perez &

Carney, 2018; Turner, 2002). These issues underscore the fact that Black is as much an experience as it is a color or racial group (Bryant et al., 2005). Invisibility refers to the paradox of being physically seen, but not having one's input heard or perceived as valuable, while overvisibility alludes to the idea of tokenism and being used for optics. African American female counselor educators reported feeling the duality between these two dynamics: feelings of invisibility (marginalization) and overvisibility (tokenism) with a perceived inability to control either (Bryant et al., 2005).

High visibility for African Americans in PWIs heightens their "solo status" (numeric minority) and often stirs beliefs, covertly or overtly, about their ethnic identity, which may be rooted in negative stereotypes (Chatman et al., 2008; Harley, 2008; Harris, 2012). Solo status individuals are burdened by bias and scrutiny by some members of the majority (Johnson & Richeson, 2009). Having such small numbers of African American professors may erroneously send the message that they are not qualified (Bradley, 2005).

The participants of Johnson and Richeson's (2009) study included 32 Whites and 34 minority (Black and Hispanic) undergraduates who were assigned a task and informed that a video of them discussing racial inequality would be reviewed by a task group. In an attempt to produce a sense of solo status, minority participants were told their video would be viewed only by Whites, and Whites were told their video would be viewed only by racial minority individuals (Johnson & Richeson, 2009). In this work, minority participants reported that solo status created greater costs (emotionally) than did White participants (Johnson & Richeson, 2009). Solo status damaged its representatives by setting them apart. This concept of solo status is additionally defined as "other" (Harris, 2012). One study participant stated, "I must always be 'on guard' against people and systems that render me an Other" (Harris, 2012, p. 104). While there are



challenging experiences for both women faculty and faculty of color, the experiences of women faculty of color are invisible, hidden within studies of women faculty or faculty of color (Ford, 2011; Turner, 2002). This idea of conspicuously, visibly standing out, particularly on predominately White campuses, but feeling simultaneously unseen and unheard as the result of having no input in crucial decisions made in informal settings that one is often excluded from has warranted the need for mentors to offer guidance through the system(s) in place (Bryant et al., 2005).

### **Dishonor from Students**

Not only did the literature review reveal a pattern of invisibility and overvisibility/hypervisibility (raced, gendered, othered; Cartwright et al., 2009; Chang et al., 2013; Constantine et al., 2008; Ford, 2011; Perez & Carney, 2018; Turner, 2002), but a disturbing result of such visibility issues including dishonor and disrespect from some students. For minority women, the role of poor student evaluations also presents an obstacle. Women tend to obtain poorer student evaluations as compared with male professors, and minority women have the poorest student evaluation scores (Croom, 2017; Diggs et al., 2009; Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014; Perez & Carney, 2018; Pittman, 2010).

Minority women receive poorer student evaluations, particularly from White men (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014; Pittman 2010). This seems to indicate that minority women appear to challenge the historical persona of who a professor is (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014; Pittman, 2010). Student evaluations are more negative for faculty who are women of color: Higher faculty evaluations are given to White men than White women, followed by Black men, and then by Black women (Hamermesh & Parker, 2005). African American female counselor educators have been perceived by some students as incompetent and

incapable. After throwing a chair, one White male student stated, “I don’t want that grade. You can’t teach. I’m going to see that you don’t get tenure” (Bradley, 2005, p. 521). While the student received no punishment, the African American professor did by essentially being told boys will be boys (Bradley, 2005). It is far too common for students to question African American female professors’ qualifications, credibility, and capability (Allison, 2008).

Turner’s (2002) interviewees in the article “Women of Color in Academe: Living with Multiple Marginality” disclosed that students are more likely to challenge African American female faculty in class in front of other students but are not as likely to challenge White male faculty age 50 or older in the same manner. Student evaluations must be seen in light of prejudices (Springer & Westerhaus, 2006). The challenge is seen as the belief that female African American faculty are less prepared (Turner, 2002). Harris (2012) recalled, as a female African American professor, being wrongly accused by a student of benefiting from affirmative action as faculty which mimicked challenges by students in general directed toward African American female faculty more than other genders and other races (Griffin, 2016; Harris, 2012). Challenges to expertise, role, and research are common (Perez & Carney, 2018). Additional derogatory statements include accusations that the faculty was an affirmative action hire, and suggestions to go back to Africa (Bradley, 2005). These challenges have some historical basis of a view of Black femininity as unflattering (Sapphire); African American female professors often have two images to contend with (one they hold, the other others hold; Griffin, 2016; Harris-Perry, 2011). Turner (2002) also identified the same dynamic with other female faculty of color:

I am struck by my lived contradiction: To be a professor is to be an anglo [sic]; to be a latina [sic] is not to be an anglo [sic]. So how can I be both a Latina and a professor? To

be a Latina professor, I conclude, means to be unlike and like me. Que locura! What madness! (p.75)

It is common for female African American faculty to have their professional qualifications and/or credentials questioned, receive minimal mentoring, be overburdened with organization expectations for service-oriented involvement, encounter race and gender discriminations, and experience self-consciousness as well as microaggressions and still persist in the academy (Constantine et al., 2008; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Giralt, 2015).

While emotionally taxing, these challenges can be discounted, particularly when the support of the academic establishment is unwavering, but challenges originating from colleagues are not easily overlooked. Negative beliefs about African American professors cause them to be less successful at research universities (Edwards et al., 2011; Modica & Mamiseishvili, 2010). They experience exclusion from research projects (least likely to be asked) because some of their research interest focuses on race, which is all too often considered a soft discipline (Bradley, 2005). This combination of student and faculty challenges together become tougher to discount (Perez & Carney, 2018). These trials become barriers to promotion and tenure.

## **Tenure**

Ample research has been devoted to the subject of tenure, and according to Woolley and Woolley (2007), tenure deserves serious scrutiny to ensure it remains fair and nondiscriminatory. One report found that Black women are more likely than Black men, White men, and White women to leave tenure-track positions as the result of racism (Darity, 2008). While the pinnacle of academic success has historically been tenure, this marker paled in comparison to many women of color's dedication or intelligence (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002). Tenure has historically been judged by people who may be distanced from multiculturalism and the position

of marginalized other, and as such an erroneous attempt may be made to tenure those who approximate an already-flawed system as opposed to those who may add to it (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002). It is understood that the core belief of tenure is to promote based upon a legitimate gatekeeping strategy, but the legitimate responsibility of gatekeeping (impartial and rational rules) often encounters race, gender, and class privilege which are subjective and culturally defined (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002). Many countries, such as the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Japan, have similar tenure procedures, and traditionally the professorate has been populated with those who espoused the traditional views of heteronormativity and femininity (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002).

Tierney and Bensimon (1996) discussed the idea that tenure was an outdated model and that studies concerning tenure-track positions revealed challenges for women and minorities. The concern even during Tierney and Bensimon's publication was unfair practices concerning tenure, including women feeling excluded, and minorities feeling overworked and overextended to serve on diversity and mentoring committees. Years later, Croom (2017) investigated the post-tenure experiences of Black womyn (the *y* is used to exclude the *e* as in *men*, which is the traditional spelling *women*) and declares those who commence without status continue to remain marginalized even throughout their careers. Croom (2017) examined the reality of racism and sexism in the promotion processes to the rank of professor for Black womyn faculty as well as their experiences with gendered and racial systems of oppression with a primary goal to understand institutionalized systems of oppression. Croom discovered dominant narratives of the profession (previously/historically held beliefs overwhelmingly shaped present professional perceptions), navigating aspirations and expectations (varying ambitions of professional

accomplishment, tenure or beyond), and racialized and gendered microaggressions (insults and assaults with the possibility of producing racial battle fatigue).

Croom's (2017) qualitative study uses critical race feminism, biological narratives (counterstorytelling), and a purposive sampling of tenured Black female faculty. The elements of critical race feminism drawn upon for this study were intersectionality and anti-essentialism (convergence of systems of oppression, constructed histories, and perceptions); the endemic nature of racism, sexism, and classism (social institutions house systemic oppressions); the value of experiential knowledge and challenging ahistoricism (narrative and counterstorytelling are compulsory); the need to liberal ideologies (deconstructs race myths); and praxis (theory and practice).

Another study revealed that although tenure is typically based on research (historically primary and focused on quantitative endeavors), teaching, and service, well-qualified candidates were still denied (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002). In this study, Candidate A, a multiracial lesbian, was highly recognized with prestigious awards and published at a remarkable rate but suffered from poor teacher evaluations and was denied tenure because the message she taught concerning multiculturalism was unpalatable for some, particularly the privileged (male, White) students. Candidate B, an Asian American female, was denied tenure due to student complaints without investigations into the allegations, although she met the university's publishing standards concerning tenure. Candidate C, an African American female, was denied tenure because she prioritized mentoring over publications (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002). Candidate D, an Asian American female, was denied tenure reportedly due to her China-related research interest (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002).

Turner et al. (1999) asserted that tenure policies needed to be revisited and changed, and Agathangelou and Ling (2002) encountered the same issues and reached the same conclusions (Allison, 2008). One requirement for tenure is publication, but the “right” publications are those deemed important by White scholars, while Blacks tend to publish in, and have an affinity for, publications which value the qualitative experiences of marginalized others. Denial of tenure often has little to do with a lack of intelligence, dedication, or publications, but more with an imprecise system subject to unconscious bias (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002).

The primary goal of faculty working in four-year universities continues to be promotion and tenure (Jones et al., 2015; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Jones et al.’s (2015) descriptive phenomenological study of five African American female professors’ journeys through the tenure process using 45–90-minute interviews confirmed the need for transparent tenure and promotion guidelines. Challenges faced, but also challenges overcome, included African American females being more underrepresented in PWIs than males; collegial and student disrespect (devaluation of scholarship, formal student complaints and student evaluations); marginalization (positionality of outsider within stance); and academic bullying (covert and overt peer-aggression; Jones et al., 2015). The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in Black feminist thought and relational-cultural theory. Three themes which emerged were systemic oppression at PWIs (being under the microscope, having an extra workload, and being set up to fail), external supports (mentoring, professional networking, and leadership support), and internal coping mechanisms (persistence, spiritual/religious practices, workload/time management, and personal integrity). The conclusions encompassed the thought that university leaders must take a stand for diversity by supporting formal mentoring programs while

simultaneously ensuring successful transition from nontenured to tenured in order to maintain quality female African American professors (Jones et al., 2015).

Using a theoretical lens of CRT (voices through storytelling, interviews, and purposeful planned 60–90-minute focus groups), Diggs et al.'s (2009) study included four faculty of color, three of whom were pursuing tenure and one tenured mentor. Four (out of eight) themes identified during this study to answer the research question, “What do participants identify as supports for and barriers to them during the tenure process?” (Diggs et al., 2009, p. 318) were academic identity (a personal, professional, and cultural voice separate from institutional identity), confronting diversity (faculty of color reported daily living their diversity, but struggled with majority faculty when racism seemed intellectualized), mentoring (professional and social/informal supports), and safe spaces (safe spaces were colored spaces vs. integrated spaces; Diggs et al., 2009). Similarities in the presented studies suggest a need for further evaluation of the current tenure protocol system while simultaneously accentuating the importance of mentoring programs to assist African American female faculty with navigation of the existing systems in place.

### **Mentoring**

The concept of mentorship is abundant in the literature in many disciplines, for many genders, and for various races. An unspoken role of mentor is supporter, and the significance of mentoring encompasses the concept “I am because we are” suggesting ownership in another's success or failure (Bryant et al., 2005, p. 317). In one collective case study, six Black women who self-identified as “sister scholars” (Dowdy, 2008, p. 27) wrote about analogous themes of discovery (research), application (the sharing of knowledge through research), and teaching (the sharing of one's wisdom) with a reported unanimity that mentoring makes a difference—“we are

still ‘becoming’ as well” (Dowdy, 2008, p. 38). There is a parallel between minoritized student’s retention and diverse faculty retention; minority student retention, persistence, promotion, and graduation is correlated to diverse faculty retention, promotion, and tenure (Hurtado et al., 2012). The relationship between quality mentoring and educational persistence affects attrition rates as well as the students who terminate their educational pursuits. Faculty who spend time mentoring at-risk students may additionally affect organizations, communities, families, etc. (Di Pierro, 2012; Ovink & Veazey, 2011; Thomas et al., 2014).

Shillingford et al.’s (2013) qualitative study on minority female counselor education and wellness emphasized the importance of mentors to model success in handling overall wellness, including handling instances of racism and stereotypes, feelings of invisibility and overvisibility, and feelings of alienation and devaluation. Study participants also reported desiring mentors they could “call on at any time,” who were “minority women like myself,” and “minority mentors who will understand what I am going through” (Shillingford et al., 2013, p. 263).

Austin’s (2002) four-year qualitative, longitudinal study found unmet desires of new faculty/teaching assistants mentoring, advising, and feedback, as well as structured opportunities with peers, diverse teaching opportunities, transparency concerning faculty responsibilities, and reflection as themes. Mentoring for many people of color, faculty of color included, carries a “cultural taxation” (Padilla, 1994, p. 26), that exists when individuals of color are called upon as diversity/mentoring experts for minorities, while “identity taxation” (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012, p. 214) requires minority faculty to accept physical, mental, or emotional labor from those within their departments or universities, mainly because of their inclusion in a historically marginalized group. The idea of mentoring is to afford others an opportunity to struggle out loud versus hiding challenges in the dark (Griffin, 2012). One newly minted African American female faculty



referred to mentoring as her “sister-circle” or “safe space” where she can be her authentic self (Harris, 2012).

While students of color lean on faculty of color for support (Griffin, 2016), many will need, but not likely receive mentoring (Evans & Cokley, 2008). The same is true for faculty of color (Evans & Cokley, 2008). The demand for mentoring for faculty of color makes it both a burden and pleasure, and the dearth of African American female faculty to mentor other African American female faculty mimics this dynamic (Harley, 2008). Similarly, the presence of Latino faculty increased Latino student retention and “the availability of role models for students foster a sense of belonging and social integration among students” (Levin et al., 2013, p. 312).

Gamble and Turner (2015) discovered 10 themes in their study of 10 African American women in postsecondary education. Theme one included a lack of African American representation in postsecondary institutions, with eight of the 10 participants identifying this dynamic as a barrier; theme two was that 50% of the participants reported a lack of African American mentors was an additional barrier for African American to become leaders, while theme four addressed a similar issue, but mainly concerning mentoring as a whole. Theme three highlighted the influence of participants’ self-reported secure upbringing. Theme five emphasized the challenges experienced by the participants in finding work-life balance, with the one commonality being having children; theme six addressed networking and the participants’ agreement on its importance, as well as a number expressing feelings of being excluded. Theme seven addressed manager involvement in career advancement, theme eight the need to take risk, theme nine having a strong work ethic, and finally theme ten the importance of leaving a legacy (Gamble & Turner, 2015). The recommendations from the findings include creating a diversity board of students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and stakeholders’ developing

nondiscriminating institutional processes emphasizing equitable hiring; implementing a diversity awareness program to attract and retain the best talent; advocating for professional development to emphasize diversity with ongoing staff development opportunities; and finally employing a diverse mentorship and leadership program to facilitate attraction, recruitment, and retention of African American female talent in the professorate (Gamble & Turner, 2015).

### **Attraction, Recruitment, Retention**

The literature is not void of researchers questioning why women, as compared to men, are less frequently promoted to senior university positions, including president, dean, and full professor (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). Until this dynamic changes, representation of diverse faculty will remain bleak. Institutions of integrity are serious about recruitment and retention of minority faculty and as such recognize the need for first-hand research from minority perspectives. A testament of truth to this allowance for diversity in the professorate will be represented through the academy's ability to attract, recruit, and retain diverse faculty. It is unlikely that diverse faculty will be drawn to the academy without purposeful, deliberate efforts on behalf of the academy to actively attract, recruit, and strategically retain them. Recruitment efforts may include search committees, while retention efforts may include support through mentorship and value through promotion and tenure (Springer & Westerhaus, 2006).

In addition, African American male counselor educators are underrepresented, and scholars express concern with recruitment of this population as well (Brooks & Sheen, 2010). African American male counselor educators have challenges similar to those faced by African American female counselor educators: barriers, finances, mentorship, promotion and tenure, retention, stress, and unwelcoming work environments (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Brooks & Steen, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). Again, African American female

counselor educators are affected by racism like male counselor educators, but as previously mentioned, they are additionally plagued with sexism in addition to racism, discrimination, and oppression (Pittman, 2010; Turner et al., 2008). Failure of the academy to alter the trajectory of African American female counselor educators in the professorate may simultaneously affect the representation of minority students in academia as the two dynamics are synergistically linked (Bradley, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014; Turner et al., 2008).

Specifically, the focus of this paper will be the underrepresentation of African American female counselor educators. Holcomb-McCoy and Bradley (2003) employed an exploratory study with 134 CACREP-accredited counseling programs being represented and 73 CACREP liaisons responding to a survey investigating strategies used to recruit ethnic minority counselor educators. The survey categories included advertising in minority publications, networking, directly contacting possible applicants, and recruiting at conferences, to name a few (Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). While 44 liaisons reported they had representation from underrepresented minority groups, 26 reported they did not and three neglected to respond. Of the 73 respondents, only 26 responded concerning their program's minority recruitment agenda, while the remaining 47 either left the survey item unanswered or reported that their institutions had no such recruitment agenda (Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). The need for additional studies is evident, and the goal is to ascertain strategies for attraction, recruitment, and retention to challenge underrepresentation while safeguarding persistence.

### **Persistence**

The ultimate goal in attracting, recruiting, and retaining African American female talent in the professorate is to identify those things that promote persistence while also identifying

those things that limit underrepresentation. While recruitment and retention of African American female faculty is foundational, it is also this population's visibility in these institutions that produce persistence, as well as when faculty who understand the minority experiences are supportive and instrumental in improving faculty diversity (Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). According to Ortega-Liston and Rodriguez Soto (2014), in higher education and elsewhere, women enter and exit the workplace more frequently than men, so their permanence through visibility to students and other faculty facilitates persistence. Attraction, recruitment, and retention are necessary first steps, but it is when diversity and persistence of such faculty becomes the mantra and core value of the institution university-wide and is known to be the priority from the top that persistence is all but certain.

In addition to institutional support, self-efficacy is a critical and necessary trait for persistence (Beckwith et al., 2016). This innate sense of self-belief is fostered, in students and faculty, through a sense of inclusion and mentorship (Baggerly et al., 2017; Di Pierro, 2012; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; Stanley, 2006; Thomas et al., 2014). Johnson et al. (2007) elaborated on this point by specifying the importance of purposeful and intentional mentoring. Mentoring takes place officially and unofficially by African American female faculty whether acknowledged by university leadership or not, but persistence is fostered when there is a sense that universities care about what the individual cares about, when things that matter also count and are acknowledged (Chang et al., 2013).

### **Underrepresentation**

The issue of underrepresentation is not limited to the United States but appears to be a global reality. Neither the United States, New Zealand, Finland, Australia, Ireland, nor the United Kingdom have more than 17% women in the professorate (Gallant, 2014; Xiang et al.,

2017). Higher education faculty remains one of the least integrated professions (Springer & Westerhaus, 2006). Advancement, in terms of promotion and tenure, made by Hispanic, Black, and Asian female professors in higher education is scarce, and challenges are plentiful (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). Black women educators are often segregated because they are differentiated from both White and Black males because of their gender and from White women because of their race; the result is isolation (Pittman, 2010). This underrepresentation and otherness create a sense of double disadvantage and dual bias (race and gender; Beckwith et al., 2016). Underrepresentation of African American females in the professorate does not discount the need for these voices in education, but their natural propensity to manifest diversity further speaks to their need in higher education to facilitate intercultural competence (Coker, 2011; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Madyun et al., 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Mentoring adds value to colleges and universities overall, and according to research, a main concern with the underrepresentation of African American faculty is the correlation between their underrepresentation and African American student enrollment in institutions of higher education and persistence toward college graduation (Allen et al., 2000). African American students are more likely to enroll and persist when institutions recruit and retain African American faculty (Allen et al., 2000). The perception of the “typical” academician is challenged by underrepresented faculty, who are themselves often intersectionally marked and othered, therefore identifying with marginalized students (Chang et al., 2013).

Underrepresentation of minority faculty has been linked to minority student attrition (Baggerly et al., 2017; Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). The underrepresentation of both groups (students and faculty) is considered a pipeline issue; leaks in

the pipeline allows talent to slip through (Ovink & Veazey, 2011). The pipeline issue does not only exist in education, hindering advancement in academe, but for women, African American women in particular, advancing to leadership positions in general (Carli & Eagly, 2001). Pipeline repair, specific to African American female faculty, is beneficial for their continued persistence and challenges their underrepresentation because it encourages diversity of ideas and thought (Han & Leonard, 2017; Moses, 2017), strengthens intellectual capital (Hodges & Isaac-Savage, 2016; Rice & Alfred, 2014), and supports and develops cultural capital—tangible or intangible elements that give individuals advantages in certain contexts (Madyun et al., 2013; Ovink & Veazey, 2011).

Combined realities such as interpersonal and institutional racial oppression, awareness of overrepresentation of African American individuals in low-status careers, and lack of role models or mentors in high-status careers may contribute to internal negative self-perception and to the existence of barriers (Brown & Lent, 2013; Brown et al., 2017; Brown & Segrist, 2016). Literature suggests that the seriousness and importance of this issue would best be served by looking through a qualitative, CRT, feminist theory worldview. Gottfredson's (1981) theory of circumscription and compromise, while peripheral, is also worthy of further consideration as a potential internal barrier.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed the literature surrounding African American females in the professorate. The review covers internal barriers (internalized racial oppression and values), identity negotiation, sociocultural adaptation, external barriers (racism, oppression, discrimination, stereotyping, stereotype threat, isolation, visibility, dishonor, tenure, and mentoring), attraction, recruitment, and retention, and persistence and underrepresentation of

African American female academic talent. With diverse educational experiences, all students and faculty benefit; White students and faculty are exposed to multiculturalism and students and faculty of color are validated in their minoritized state. When faculty of color and women are underrepresented in the professorate, valuable diversity is unrealized. While previous research has addressed the underrepresentation of African American females in the professorate, a negligible amount addresses the underrepresentation in CES expressly. This study seeks to bridge the gap with a quality look into this phenomenon. Chapter Three will concentrate on the methodology used to investigate the underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction and Overview**

Chapter One of this work introduced the concept of underrepresentation of African American females in the professorate, particularly the counselor education professorate. The concept of barriers (internal and external) was also introduced with the divergent outcomes of underrepresentation and persistence being highlighted. Chapter Two was a review of the literature concerning this dynamic, with issues of racism, discrimination, oppression, stereotyping, etc., also being underscored. Chapter Three described the method which was utilized to investigate the above-mentioned phenomenon. This chapter encompassed the research design and highlighted the research process in its entirety. It offered a rationale for employing a qualitative phenomenological methodology, including photovoice and the theories undergirding the theoretical framework (CRT, feminist theory, and Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise). The chapter closely examined the research purpose, the research question, participants, data collection, data analysis, researcher positionality, validity and reliability and ethical considerations.

### **Research Design**

Research design is the entire process of research. It includes not only the collection, analysis, and writing of the data, but conceptualization as well (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prior to selecting phenomenology, four other approaches of qualitative research were painstakingly considered to discover the best approach to address the research question. Due to some evident overlap between some approaches (i.e., case study and phenomenology), the terms 'best approach' should not be misinterpreted or interchanged with the terms 'only approach' in this context. The rationale behind choosing phenomenology versus the other four approaches does



not speak to their value, but to their suitability. While ethnography is the way of life of a culture or group, this methodology was not chosen because this study does not focus on an entire group from a macro perspective, but instead on the lived experience(s) of a particular subgroup within the larger group (McLeod, 2011). Grounded theory has been described as the market leader in qualitative research and its attraction is the development of theory as a result of the data (McLeod, 2011). This approach was not utilized for this study due to the existence of valued theories (CRT, feminist theory, Gottfredson) which, at this moment, precisely capture and illuminate the multiple layers of oppression being studied from a culturally historical, and present day, perspective. Case studies carefully ask wide-ranging research questions including outcome questions, theory-building questions, pragmatic questions, experiential or narrative questions, or organizational questions of an individual, group, community, process or an event with a research focus of developing in-dept analysis (McLeod, 2011). This approach was not utilized due to this researcher's desire to understand the essence of whatever information was discovered from the lived experience of the subject(s) versus seeking specific information (McLeod, 2011). Although narrative studies put great emphasis on individuals' stories themselves, phenomenology also pursues that objective, but furthermore it seeks to understand the essence of the lived experience and meaning, therefore a narrative approach was also not utilized (McLeod, 2011).

The research method used in any study should be determined by the best approach for addressing the research question. Qualitative research is used to uncover richness in the lived experiences of others (Bernard et al., 2017), and phenomenology is used to explore those lived experiences and describe them with depth and meaning (Hays & Wood, 2011). In an attempt to understand phenomena from the perspective of the participants being studied, in terms of the

meaning they bring, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Making use of empirical data, the world of the subject being studied is brought to life through notes, interviews, photographs, conversations, and recordings, transporting the qualitative researcher into the world of the subject which has now been made visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The crux of qualitative study is the research and compilation of empirical materials (case study, interviews, artifacts, etc.) that describe moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The exploration of this nonnumerical, narrative, and visual data relied heavily on the researcher, however the core of this research relied primarily on the lived experiences of its participants.

McLeod (2011) described phenomenology as “the process of constructing a comprehensive descriptive account of an aspect of social life that is being investigated” (p. 21). This phenomenological method was utilized to understand the experiences of African American female professors through their own eyes (Hays & Wood, 2011). This approach was ideal for the task of understanding the experiences of African American female professors as minoritized others at the intersection of race and gender. Phenomenological interviewing is arriving as close as possible to the participants' “is” (state of being; Seidman, 2012). “Is” is defined as not only the participants' experience and the meaning attributed to it, but also the “will be” and the “was” (Seidman, 2012). The approach values the holistic experiences of the participants (Giorgi, 2012).

Phenomenology triggers quite a debate from within the field from those who differ in their understanding of what it is, however, there is consensus that excessive use of the term will erode phenomenology's reputation (Zahavi, 2019a). The original sense of phenomenology, according to van Manen, is philosophical, and seeks to understand the lived meaning of an experience with the question being, “what is that lived experience like” (Zahavi, 2019a, p. 901).

Additionally, van Manen stated phenomenology's functional method is reduction and the epoché (Zahavi, 2019a, p. 902). Moustakas described reduction and epoché as setting aside biases and Husserl identified it as the freedom of suppositions (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology stresses how the world shows up for the subject and it allows a phenomenon to show itself as opposed to manipulating the phenomenon in any way (Zahavi, 2019a, pp. 903–904). The core of phenomenology is investigating the essence of the lived meaning of an experience versus simply engaging in superficial exploration (Zahavi, 2019b). Phenomenology is both a research method and philosophy (Dowling, 2007). The term comes from the Greek and means to show itself to appear (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl saw it as one's Lifeworld (Moustakas, 1994) and Merleau-Ponty believed its goal is to rediscover first experience and facilitate facticity (Dowling, 2007, p. 134). Because a primary belief of phenomenology is that one cannot be separate from his/her experience, this qualitative approach was chosen to authentically explore the underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate.

As mentioned earlier, the research process is inclusive of research conceptualization through data analysis and interpretation. The detailed process mentioned above has been simplified in Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) five step process below:

1. The researcher is a multicultural subject who enters history and the experience of the participants both humbly and ethically.
2. As philosophers, qualitative researchers have nets which contain epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises termed theoretical paradigms and perspectives.
3. The research strategies (study design, case study, ethnography, etc. mentioned above) situates the researcher in the world of the participants.

4. The large amounts of qualitative materials (interviews, observations, artifacts, documents, records, visual methods, etc.) must be appropriately collected and analyzed.
5. Interpretation and evaluation of data is meticulously constructed in artistic diligence with political underpinnings.

### **Photovoice**

Adding to the richness of phenomenological interviewing, photovoice, which is a qualitative method, positions individuals as both participants and coresearchers by asking them to photograph their points of view. Photovoice participants are intermingled into the research process while their experiences and perspectives are highlighted and brought to the center using their own photographs (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017). These combined methods were utilized to explore the themes and answer the research question from a phenomenological retrospective view: “What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors’ experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?” While photovoice is the lens through which the participants see, understand, and conceptualize their own experiences, CRT (Haskins & Singh, 2015), feminist theory (Collins, 2000), and Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1981), further described below, are lenses through which this researcher sees the challenges of underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate.

The concept of photovoice is hidden in plain sight in its name: giving voice to individuals through their own photos. The methodology of photovoice is fortified by feminism (focus on gender, race, class, culture, oppression, and domination), critical consciousness (integrated with reality versus naïve consciousness or fanatical consciousness), and participatory documentary photography (raises awareness about individuals and society; Latz & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 40). It is

a qualitative method used for community-based participatory research to document and reflect reality as participants see it and allow participants to express their points of view or represent their communities by photographing scenes that highlight research themes (Wang & Burris, 1997). It is the role of the participant to assign meaning to the photographs they take, not the researcher (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017). The participants control the narrative as coresearchers, and the questions a primary researcher may ask coresearchers about photos are numerous: Why did you take this photo? What were you thinking at the time? How does this photo speak to you about your positionality as the subject of this research? As you look at your photo, what are your thoughts? and so on. The possible questions to be asked and the insight to be gained from a photograph are essentially limitless.

Individual perception partnered with internal dialogue is how people view and interpret not only their world, but the world around them. Photovoice participants, through their photos, share that inner experience with the outer world.

Photovoice has three main goals: (1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussions of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers. (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 370)

Of the three goals mentioned, only the first stands as the immediate focus of this research, with the remaining two goals slotted for future endeavors.

The power in photovoice, as with many photos and/or visual images, is found in its ability to bypass cognitions and go directly to participants' internalized perceptions without the researcher's narrative. It is still the participants' responsibility to title and describe the images photographed because the intention is for the coresearcher, not the viewer, to apply meaning to

the photo, although it is highly unlikely that each viewer will not have some self-imposed meaning. The idea of photovoice is to give voice, power, and meaning of the photos to the coresearcher (participants), while they, in turn, give meaning to said photos as a gift to the viewer. Photovoice researchers identify people, places, and purpose; invites participants to join the research as coresearchers; and educates coresearchers about photovoice. Documents (photographs) are taken by participants, and participants narrate the meaning(s) behind their photographs. Ideation occurs when the primary researcher(s) identify thematic strands, convert themes into findings with implications, officially present findings, and achieve confirmation through feedback (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017).

While using visual data in qualitative research is empowering to the coresearcher, it is not without its challenges. A challenge for the coresearcher is the thought of becoming the definitive voice of a community; therefore, the coresearcher may, in an attempt to not photograph haphazardly, overanalyze their photos (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). In addition, coresearchers may feel pressure as they contemplate how their stories will be presented (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017). While challenges and concerns may be numerous, they tend to cluster in specific groupings (see Table 2).

**Table 2***Ethical Concerns Regarding Voice in Photovoice Research*

Issue	Ethical Concern
Privacy	Breach of confidentiality through identification of persons and property.
Safety	Primary researcher must remain diligent in monitoring photo selection and ensuring activities portrayed by participants are not self-implicating (illegal).
Photo selection, presentation, and publication	Dynamics concerning photo selection and use of photos in presentations and publications.
Researcher influence over subject matter for participant photos	Primary researcher must remain aware of power differential and encourage participants autonomy in taking photos.
Photo ownership	Rigorous efforts must be taken to inform participants of nuances of release of photo ownership including researcher freedom in selection, presentation, and publication of resulting data.
Advocacy	Participants self-rule in matters of policy change (particularly concerning participatory action research).

Adapted from “Questioning Photovoice Research: Whose Voice?” by R. A. Evans-Agnew and M-A. S. Rosenberg, 2016, *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(8), 1019–1030, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315624223>.

Ethical concerns listed above (privacy, safety, selection, presentation, and publication of photos, researcher influence, photo ownership, and advocacy) are generally common and can be

addressed using consent forms (Appendix G). While the core of photovoice is what the coresearcher (participant) sees, a conceptual framework is how the primary researcher understands it. In this study, the lived of African American females in the CES professorate can be better understood in light of the three theories mentioned here: CRT, feminist theory, and Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Due to its roots in women's studies, sociology, history, and ethnic studies, I chose to use CRT to peer into the lives of African American female counselor educators as part of the theoretical framework (Solorzano et al., 2000). "Critical race theorists argue that the majority of racism remains hidden beneath a veneer of normality and it is only the more crude and obvious forms of racism that are seen as problematic by most people" (Gillborn, 2015, p. 278). It is regularly unseen and mostly unrecognized due to this dynamic. Using CRT for this study complements the race, gender, history, and experiences of the African American female counselor educators who are the focus of this study and serve as coresearchers. Given that the subjects/participants of this study are African American females and since a core tenet of CRT is the centrality of race and its intersectionality with additional subordination, combining the two entities seemed judicious. Similar to counter-storytelling, which allows individuals to challenge claims of meritocracy (Haskins & Singh, 2015), another core of CRT is the challenge to dominant ideology (Solorzano et al., 2000). CRT is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that uses critical theory to examine society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, law, and power (Crenshaw, 1989). The tenets of CRT include the belief that racism is deep-rooted causing an intersectionality between race and racism; CRT challenges meritocracy and claims of colorblindness; CRT utilizes counter-storytelling which allows individuals to



challenge claims of meritocracy and colorblindness; CRT encourages caution in examining and interpreting civil rights victories; and finally, CRT posits Whiteness as property, having social, educational, and economic value (Haskins & Singh, 2015, p. 290). Because education recognizes the multiple layers of oppression, CRT addresses the simultaneous existence of emancipation and empowerment as well as oppression and marginalization (Solorano & Yosso, 2002).

### **Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory, as thought by many people, does look at the roles of men and women and the injustices experienced by women as a group. What feminism is not is a hatred of others simply on the basis of their gender. Feminism encompasses theory, philosophy, and fictional discourse and understands and acknowledges gender inequality and that race and gender issues are not mutually exclusive (Crenshaw, 1989). Feminist theory conceptualizes race and gender from a heterodox (unorthodox) position (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002). Because Black women are positioned intersectionally by race and gender, feminist theory addresses this intersection and where Black females reside on the matrix of domination (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Historically, women's discrimination cases have highlighted Caucasian women while Black discrimination cases have highlighted Black men, creating the need for a theory which addressed the intersectionality of Black women. Adding an additional layer of insight, Black feminist thought was previewed. Black feminist thought is produced by Black women and is based on the assumption that their thoughts cannot be separated from the historical conditions which shaped them nor their unique experiences (Collins, 2000). And while there are commonalities shared by Black women as a group, there are differences produced by class, religion, sexual orientation, region, etc., which cannot be omitted. Therefore, this piece honored the Black female experience and maintained self-definition as well as self-valuation (Collins, 2000).

### **Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise**

Photovoice is used to visually represent a coresearcher's conceptualization of a phenomenon. CRT and feminist theory are lenses through which to view the phenomenon, and Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise may explain the internalization of the phenomenon. Gottfredson suggests individuals restrict (circumscribe) their career choices and accept lower standards than desired (compromise) for many reasons. "The theory of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 2005) emphasizes conditions that may constrain career choices, such as the perceived sex appropriateness, context, power differentials, and prestige associated with various choice options" (Brown & Lent, 2013, p. 204). This dynamic additionally illuminated the underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate. If a potential career is perceived as off limits or unattainable, individuals may avoid it altogether. Gottfredson views career choice as a matching process guided by four developmental processes during the first two decades of life (Brown & Lent, 2013; Gottfredson, 1981). Gottfredson (1981) sees aspirations as developing throughout an individual's formative years and includes such elements as cognitive growth, age-related growth in cognitive ability, self-creation, and increasingly self-directed development. Gottfredson's theory addresses concepts of circumscription (restriction) and compromise (negotiation) during key developmental stages. The developmental stages are as follows: Stage 1 (ages 3–5) – orientation to size & power, Stage 2 (ages 6–8) – orientation to sex roles, Stage 3 (ages 9–13) – orientation to social valuation, and Stage 4 [ages 14+] – orientation to unique, internal self (Gottfredson, 1981). Gottfredson suggests that by age nine to early adolescence, children begin to rule out careers based upon community norms and reference groups and what they see as possible, appropriate, and attainable. Thus, "aspirations may be shaped by perceptions of obstacles such as

discrimination and heterosexism” (Brown & Lent, 2013, p. 281). This theory sheds light on gender-based circumscription of vocational aspirations (Brown & Lent, 2013, p. 548) and addresses how marginalized individuals (women, racial minorities, those with disabilities) are seen as more susceptible to circumscription and compromise; however, research suggests this dynamic can be countered with the normalization of gender-nontraditional careers (Brown & Lent, 2013).

### **Research Purpose**

The primary purpose of this study was to address the gap in research regarding the lived experiences of African American women in the counselor education professorate. Understanding the reason behind their underrepresentation was the beginning to challenging the disturbing dynamic experienced by this people group in this space. Additionally, utilizing qualitative research methodology provided an opportunity to explore the underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate, primarily through their individual, personal lived experiences. While phenomenological qualitative research is descriptive by nature, it is the desire of this researcher that prescriptive solutions to the problem of the underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate be the result of this study. There have been significant successful efforts to increase the representation of Black undergraduate and graduate students (Perna et al., 2007), but to maintain and increase the representation of Black undergraduate and graduate students, increasing African American female faculty is imperative. “When minority students see African American and other minority faculty on campus, they believe they can also succeed and hold professional positions” (Patitu & Hinton, 2003, p. 80). This idea endorses Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription and compromise. This chapter reintroduced the research

question and explained the research design, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, researcher positionality, reliability and validity measures, and ethical considerations.

### **Research Question**

The overall goal of research is to add to the existing body of knowledge in a given field. The research questions focus on that task and ensure scientific relevance, social importance, feasibility (time and resources), and, for this researcher, personal significance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research questions seek to fully engage the essence and meaning of a human phenomenon from a qualitative, as opposed to a quantitative, perspective and allows personal and passionate involvement between researchers and research participants (Moustakas, 1994). There is no prediction or determination of causal relationships, and as opposed to ratings, measurements, or scores, its aim is careful, comprehensive, and vivid renderings of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). After reviewing the literature, the research relevance, importance, feasibility, and significance of the subject were evident. While not the only reason this topic was selected,

the experience of African American women in administrative and faculty roles is important because enrollment and persistence toward degree completion of African American students is linked to the number of African American faculty and administrators present on predominantly White campuses. (Patitu & Hinton, 2003, p. 80)

African American female CES professors' presence and persistence is invaluable. To understand this phenomenon entirely, the research question became, "What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors' experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?" As previously stated, this research question was best explored using qualitative research.

## **Participants**

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research focuses more on strategic samples (to paint a broad picture of the phenomenon being studied) or illustrative samples (since the research is not concerned with generalizing beyond this particular group), and not on statistical probabilities that a phenomenon exists in the wider population. Therefore, the aim is not to involve a large number of participants in the research (Finlay & Evans, 2009). As a result, this study involved six participants whose lived experiences served to answer the research question. The essential criteria for research participants are those individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being studied and are interested in understanding it in more detail (Moustakas, 1994). The participants for this study were African American (Black) females who were professors in counselor education. The participants were professors who were currently counselor educators or those who have been within the last five years. The primary researcher obtained verbal confirmation of employment status from both core faculty and for affiliate/adjunct faculty which consisted of school employed with, job title, employment status, length of employment and responsibilities. A purposeful sample (information rich) was used due to the phenomenological nature of the study to explore and understand the lived experience of African American female CES professors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A purposeful sample was also used to ensure the best possible opportunity for participants to engage with the research question.

Unless extreme outliers (younger than 21, older than 99) existed, age was immaterial for research participants for this study. Additional demographic information normally relevant was also immaterial (socioeconomic status, marital status, sexual identification, religion), but was collected in the event themes arose in these areas. Such demographic information may serve as

beneficial for future research, but for this study, the commanding participant requirement was to be an African American female in the CES professorate. All participants did have doctorate degrees due to the requirement for teaching in CES programs. Specific doctorate degrees held by participants did vary.

After institutional review board (IRB) approval, participants were recruited through peers, faculty, acquaintances, and organizational contacts. Peers, faculty, acquaintances and organizational contacts at various academic organizations (American Counseling Association of Georgia, American Counseling Association of Florida, Association for Counselor Education and Supervision – Southern, etc.) were aware of my research and were awaiting contact from me to share possible participant information, if any, once IRB approval was received. Participants were invited to participate in the study using a request letter (Appendix F) and were fully informed (Appendix G) of their rights as participants, which means to understand the nature of the research, what it will involve, their risks as participants, the parameters of their participation, and the primary researcher's positionality as an African American female aspiring counselor educator (Finlay & Evans, 2009).

### **Data Collection**

“Qualitative researchers accept that the researcher is a central figure who influences (and actively constructs) the collection, selection, and interpretation of data” (Finlay & Evans, 2009, p. 6). The data produced are a cocreation between the researcher and the participant (coresearcher). As a qualitative researcher, it is imperative to know how to use oneself as an empathic, warm, authentic, self-aware, active, and direct vehicle for collecting data and allowing participant transparency (Finlay & Evans, 2009). In qualitative research, data collection must be flexible and focuses on doing and being rather than protocol, procedures, and techniques (Finlay

& Evans, 2009; McLeod, 2011). One common method of data collection in qualitative research is the interview.

A qualitative research interview is not a situation where a person is passively reporting facts or opinions, but is better seen as an “encounter” where the person is actively engaged in exploring the meaning of events or experiences that have been significant for them. (Finlay & Evans, 2009, p. 96)

Interviews can be unstructured, structured, or semi-structured; open ended, think aloud, or recall; and individual or group (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Finlay & Evans, 2009; McLeod, 2011). Data collection for this study primarily consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, in which the researcher engaged in reflexive analysis, that is, critical awareness of her own assumptions. (McLeod, 2011) Photovoice photography then complements the interview.

After participants fully consented to participate in this study, an audio-recorded, semi-structured, 45–60-minute interview was arranged. Depending upon the participants’ preference, interviews were offered in person, on the telephone, and through some other social media formats (e.g., Skype), but all interviews were eventually conducted via zoom. Each interview was guided by questions from the phenomenological retrospective semi-structured interview questions in Appendix E. Participants were made aware when the recording started and stopped and as stated in informed consent, were given the opportunity to discontinue the interview at any time. It was during the initial interview that the photovoice portion of this project was further explained, and any questions regarding it were answered (Appendix H). Because interviewees’ narratives were not challenged, as stated in the informed consent, it was expected that participant risks were minimal (Appendix G). Interviews were transcribed verbatim into written form. After the interviews were completed and the data (consisting of verbatim excerpts) derived from them

analyzed, portions of individual transcripts were sent to each corresponding participant for review, follow-up email communication was maintain for member checks to discuss transcribed interviews, entertain any participant corrections, questions, and/or elaborations, and to discuss the photos taken by participants. Themes were developed from each participant's interview as well as those additional themes identified from the photovoice photos. These themes were further analyzed in order to develop research findings.

### **Data Analysis**

While it is true that themes emerge from data, it is not automatic as the word *emerge* suggests. Themes emerge (become apparent) through meticulous reexamination of the data (Finlay & Evans, 2009). Additionally, according to Finlay and Evans (2009), this idea is called *thematic analysis* and includes knowing and understanding the data thoroughly, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and ultimately producing findings. Many may propose the official analysis process begins after all interviews have been completed and transcribed, but because the researcher is engaging the data continually, it follows that analysis actually occurs continually: It is iterative, cyclical, and ongoing (Finlay & Evans, 2009). Qualitative analysis explores patterns of meaning holistically from all possible angles. Early analysis is much like brainstorming, open and free, and then takes on a more specific focus. (Finlay & Evans, 2009).

The data analysis used for this research followed the pattern of analysis of phenomenological data (Appendix I) as presented by Moustakas (1994). First, the researcher's personal experience of the phenomenon was explored; next, I thoroughly engaged with verbatim transcripts of each research participant. Finally, I considered, recorded, listed, related and clustered, reflected, synthesized, and ultimately constructed themes. Each interview was



transcribed verbatim and read by me several times, so I fully understood the data (Finlay & Evans, 2009). After the transcripts had been read and understood, I engaged in open coding and proceed line-by-line to identify descriptive major categories and then I conducted axial coding and uncovered detailed categories, from broad to narrow (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the primary researcher and interpreter of the data, while I read, labeled, and prioritized the data, I continually self-assessed to ensure unbiased coding. As an additional layer of protection against bias, I utilized multiple qualified coders who were familiar with qualitative research to achieve intercoder agreement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Use of multiple coders to achieve intercoder agreement served to ensure reliability and validity and also to manage bias due to my positionality as an African American female pursuing the professorate.

### **Research Positionality/Bias**

As an African American female doctoral student in CES and the primary researcher of this work, I am an integral part of the world being studied (Finlay & Evans, 2009). Although I am positioned as an African American female hoping to enter the professorate, I hoped to be changed by this experience, as well as touched and surprised with new insights (Finlay & Evans, 2009). I had no desire for my involvement to, in any way, influence my coresearchers. While I presented the data in narrative form, they were supported by evidence from the participants' own words in the form of transcribed verbatim interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Finlay & Evans, 2009). The explanatory analysis was filtered through my lived experience, theoretical framework, and understanding of the phenomenon. It is due to this truth that I share my researcher bias.

I am currently 54, but I clearly remember venturing into a PWI on an "other race grant" (financial assistance to non-White students) as a 17-year-old African American female from the

East Coast. My school had a 95% White student enrollment in 1982 when I began my academic journey. There were two Black faculty there, one male, one female. Neither of my parents attended college, so when I was told by my English professor that I could not be an English major because “my people” (Blacks) did not have the ability to master the language, I discussed the comment with Cynthia Coleman, the African American female professor, later Dr. Coleman. I do not remember her comment, but she offered to tutor me in the class. In all honesty, I did not fully grasp how horrible the comment was until many years later. Microaggression was also not a term I was familiar with until many years later. After many years, I completed a degree in English, not realizing what a victory that was, only to feel unsatisfied and desire more. After the traumatic birth of my now 28-year-old daughter at one pound, 11 ounces, I felt called to pursue counseling. When I completed my master’s degree in counseling psychology, I began to teach at a local community college, but at no time did I consider the professorate. I again felt uneasy and decided to teach at a local Christian university. My first year I was challenged by a student for giving her a B, and I felt unsupported by my administration. I had students come late to class, leave early, refuse to comply with due dates, and challenge me if their grades reflected what I perceived their performance to be. Again, it was not until I began this research that I realized African American female professors are more challenged by students and confronted and evaluated more harshly than other female professors and Caucasian professors as well. My experience, while initially heartbreaking and disturbing, serves as the catalyst for me to enter the professorate and facilitate change. I have probed my own biases concerning why I have chosen this discipline as well as why I have chosen to conduct this study, and I am confident that my intersectional positionality, whether raced, gendered, social, or philosophical, in this study serves as opposed to hinders this work. Had I not myself experienced many of the things the research

identified, I do not know if I would have fully appreciated the damage they cause. In addition to my own self-awareness and disclosure, reliability and validity measures serve as counters to ensure biases do not taint the data in any way (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). These measures are credibility, member checking, triangulation, and trustworthiness.

### **Validity and Reliability**

#### **Credibility**

Credibility is a well-known term suggesting believability and trustworthiness, and in qualitative research, it refers to the degree research findings make sense. Credibility replaces the conventional quantitative criterion of internal validity (Finlay & Evans, 2009). It is advised that qualitative research be judged mainly by three criteria: rigor (Has the research been competently managed? Is it based on methodical critical reflection? Is it coherent? Are interpretations plausible and justified?), relevance (Does the research add to the body of knowledge relating to an issue or aspect of social life and enrich our understanding of the human condition?), and resonance (To what extent is the consumer of the data touched by the findings?; Finlay & Evans, 2009).

#### **Member Checking**

Member checking occurs when researchers refer their data back to their participant coresearchers so they may confirm and comment on the accuracy of the findings of the study. When the coresearcher agrees with the interpretations of the findings, the researcher's case is strengthened (Finlay & Evans, 2009; McLeod, 2011). A member check as well as follow-up email communication was conducted during this phase of the research: the first contact was conducted after the initial interviews are transcribed, when the interview participant verified the

accuracy of the transcription, and continued communication was conducted as needed for follow-up.

### **Triangulation**

The purpose of triangulation is to find evidence of corroboration between multiple data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the search for themes within data, triangulation sheds light on perspectives through comparison among and between sources. “When qualitative researchers locate evidence to document a code or theme in different sources of data, they are triangulating information and providing validity for their findings” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 260).

Triangulation was accomplished in this study through multiple interviews, photos, member checks, and researcher personal reflexivity.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is often accompanied by terms such as *authenticity* and encompasses the elements of credibility, member checking, and triangulation, which were all used in this study to support its trustworthiness. In addition to these three elements, the catalyst of trustworthiness includes prolonged engagement and persistent observation when engaged in field work, the use of peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarification of researcher bias, thick description, and external audits. “The question of qualitative validity always comes back to a matter of whether the researcher is plausible and trustworthy” (McLeod, 2011, p. 279). A primary element needed for research to be trustworthy is for it to be ethically conducted as well.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations began before participants were solicited. IRBs are positioned to ensure ethical dealings with human subjects; therefore, IRB approval was obtained prior to

contact with any participants. After IRB approval, participants were contacted and advised of the research project. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, and their confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study's duration and after the study concluded. Participants were fully informed of their role, responsibilities, and protections through the use of an informed consent (Appendix G). Informed consent covers participants' consent to be a part of the study and to allow images to be utilized by the primary researcher, including publishing and release (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017). Consent also addresses limits for the photographs, such the restriction against photographing the self or others in any recognizable way, but it will not lead participants to what photographs to take (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017). The primary responsibility to do no harm was always be forefront for this researcher. All data will be continually maintained as confidential with no identifying information such as names appearing in any publication or presentation of the data. Tangible physical data (transcripts and photographs) will be ongoingly stored in a locked filing cabinet throughout the duration of the research, and electronic data (interviews) will be constantly stored on a password-protected laptop. Interviews/member checks were transcribed and entered into a software program (Microsoft Word) and stored in researcher's password-protected laptop. Audio files from interviews were also stored on password-protected laptop and destroyed after transcription.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, Chapter Three, the methodology used for understanding the underrepresentation of African American females in the CES was explained. Included in this chapter was an introduction and overview and an explanation of the research design (qualitative, phenomenology), photovoice, theoretical underpinnings (CRT, feminist theory, Gottfredson), purpose, research question, participants (recruitment and characteristics), data collection,

analysis, researcher bias, validity and reliability (credibility, member checking, triangulation, trustworthiness), and ethical considerations. Chapter Four will present findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of African American females in the CES professorate. The research question for this study was, “What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors’ experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?” The goal of the research was to identify any duplicatable dynamics in the lived experiences of African American female CES professors that are prescriptive for other African American females’ recruitment and retention in the CES professorate.

Chapter One of this work introduced a conceptual framework suggesting that the interaction of internal and external barriers with the academy and its policies of attraction, recruitment, and retention of African American female CES professors will produce either underrepresentation (lack of persistence) or persistence of such individuals. Chapter Two provided an extensive review of the literature that highlighted realities of African American female CES professors. Chapter Three disclosed the qualitative, phenomenological methodology used to investigate the lived experiences of this population, and this chapter presents the findings obtained from qualitative interviews of purposeful sampling participants. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six African American female CES professors. In addition to the six semi-structured interviews, four of the six interview participants provided photovoice submissions (Appendix J) attesting to what it feels like to be an African American female in the counseling education professorate.

The following themes emerged from prolonged engagement in data analysis: mentors facilitated persistence, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family

support, external barriers (encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, realities of intersectionality and minority status) and persistence. The themes offered insight and were comparative to many of the ideas presented in the literature review in Chapter Two of this work. The participant profiles are presented next, followed by themes which arose from this study.

### **Participant Profiles**

For this study, all interviews were conducted using Zoom technology (audio only) between December 2019 and January 2020. The researcher did not personally know any of the interview participants; all were referred by colleagues or friends. Once initial contact was made, all participants were sent consent forms and meeting invitations. Once consent forms were signed and returned, interviews commenced. The interviews were recorded (with participant approval) and then transcribed to allow for a detailed thematic analysis after the completion of all interviews. A sample analysis of the interview was sent to interview participants for member checks. Saturation of data was reached; therefore, six interviews were deemed sufficient as no new narratives emerged. Interviews were stored on a password-protected computer with identifying information stored separately. A pseudonym was then assigned to each participant. A total of six participants shared their stories of challenge and persistence in the CES professorate. All participants were African American females with doctoral degrees in counselor education. One participant was widowed, one single, and the remaining four were married. All participants expressed excitement about the study, and several assented that being an African American woman in the CES professorate was still riddled with challenges and such studies serve to underscore, and, with anticipation, rectify them. Within the last two years, one of the six interviewees retired from the professorate but is still active and instrumental in cultivating new



counselor educators. In an attempt to protect the true identities of the six interview participants, each was given a pseudonym, and their ages are shrouded in a five-year span (e.g., 27–32). The pseudonyms given are Pam, Brenda, Debra, Victoria, Dee, and Renee. A detailed description of the interview participants follows.

Pam is currently married and is in the 50–55-year age range. She is a fourth-generation college graduate and was born in the mid-Atlantic. She attended an HBCU and now teaches at a southern HBCU, although she initially taught at a PWI in the south-central region of the United States.

Brenda is currently married and is in the 30–35-year age range. Her mother is a college graduate, and her father is a high school graduate. Brenda attended several universities before graduating. She currently teaches full time at an HBCU in the mid-Atlantic but started her teaching career at a PWI.

Debra is married and is between 55 and 60 years old. Debra is an Ivy League graduate from the mid-Atlantic, but currently resides in the Midwest where she is a full-time professor at a PWI. She is a first-generation college student, and both she and her husband have earned doctoral degrees.

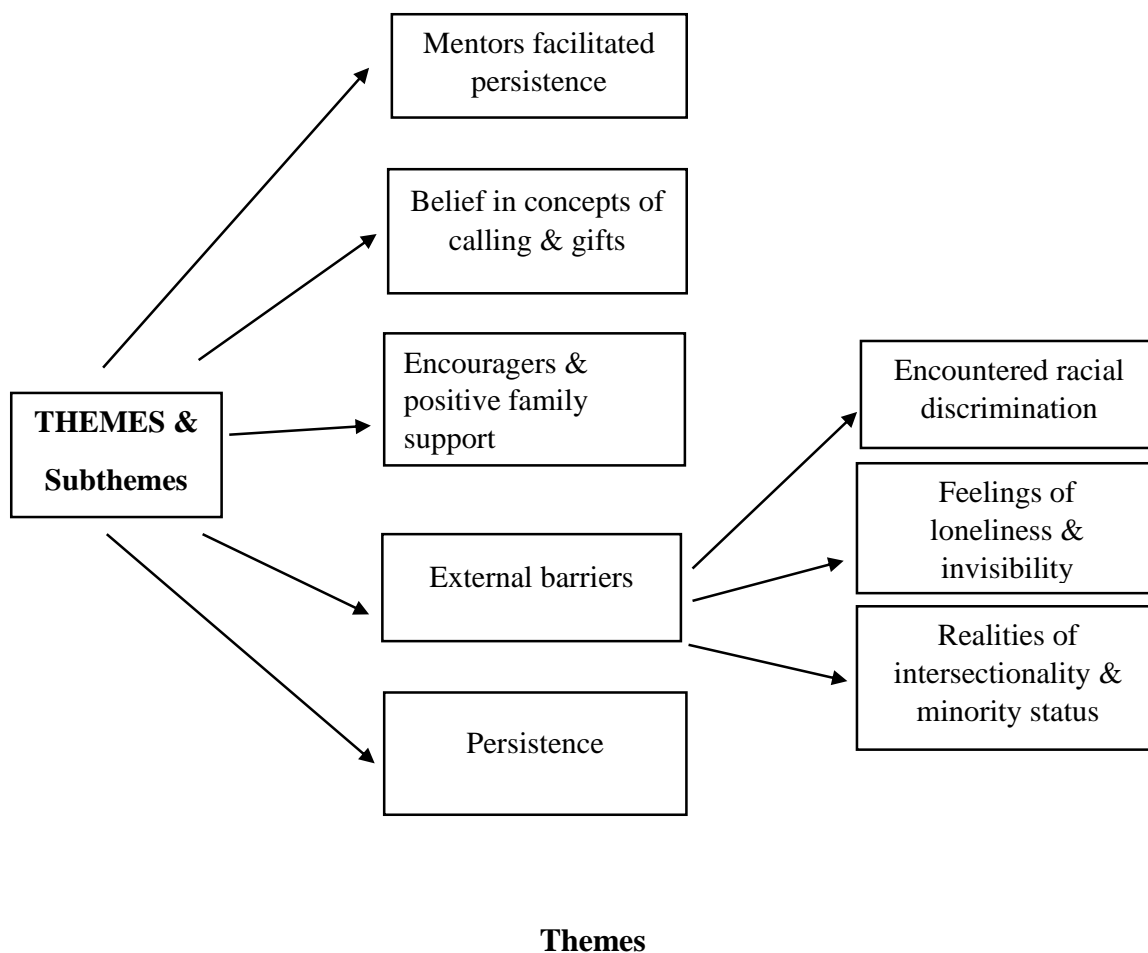
Victoria is married and is in the 45–50-year age range. Although both her parents attended some college, she is a first-generation college graduate. She reported being from a single-parent home but stated that she received encouragement from both parents. She currently teaches at a faith-based institution in the Midwest.

Dee is a widow and is in the 55–60-year age range. She reported being from a divorced home with religious underpinnings and a first-generation college graduate. Her father was in the United States military, but she was raised by her mother. Dee had been a full-time tenured

professor for nearly two decades at a faith-based institution in the mid-Atlantic when she retired in 2018.

Renee is single and is between 35 and 40 years old. She reported being a part-time professor at a faith-based institution, a PWI, and an HBCU in the southeastern United States. She reported she enjoys the flexibility of not being a full-time professor. She reported being a first-generation college student.

Interview participants were asked a series of questions and were encouraged to answer as openly and thoroughly as they desired, without fear or hesitation. As a result of the effort to understand the underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate, the research question “What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors’ experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?” underscored each interview question, and themes arose from the commonalities of the participants’ responses. Mentors facilitating persistence, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family support, external barriers, and persistence were primary themes, while encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status arose as subthemes of external barriers. Figure 2 presents the themes and subthemes.

**Figure 2***Themes and Subthemes*

Determining that a finding was a theme, a recurrent idea or concept, entailed recognizing that most, if not all, of the interview participants, reported that it contributed to their persistence in the academy and/or overcoming of external barriers. In the following sections I first define the theme and report how many of the six participants mentioned the idea. I then present verbatim samples from the data and synthesize reflections that connect the themes to tell the interview participants' stories. The first section, mentors facilitated persistence, reports what interview participants experienced concerning having, or in some cases not having, mentors in their lives,

pursuing of mentors, and becoming mentors to others. This theme was extensively discussed by five of the six interview participants.

### **Mentors Facilitated Persistence**

A prevailing theme articulated by the interview participants was, not surprisingly, mentorship. This was not an unexpected finding because the literature encompasses a comprehensive list of sources validating the benefit of mentorship which is consistent with what the interview participants of this study reported. Mentorship is defined by the literature as the process by which an experienced and trusted adviser supports and guides individuals in their lives, professionally or personally (Bryant et al., 2005, DeWitz et al., 2009; Di Pierro, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014). Five participants reported their ability to persist in the academy was often directly attributed to mentorship and someone else clearing a path or, minimally, showing the way. The concept of, “I will do it and you watch me, then we will do it together” followed by, “You do it and I will watch you, to ultimately, you do it,” is the essence of mentorship. This is consistent with the previous definition and, per the participants’ report, contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of external barriers. Five of the six interview participants of this study shared their experience with a mentor, both not having one and having one. The concept of mentorship seems to have initialized early in the lives of some of the participants and carried them through much of their lifespan. But unfortunately, Dee, Renee and Debra did not start out with mentors.

### ***No Mentorship***

As mentioned, a mentor is a trusted adviser who supports and guides. Dee, Renee, and Debra reported not initially having this element in their lives. The lack of mentorship was communicated by Dee as she recounted what her academic potential could have been: “I guess I

could have gotten a 3.0 had I known how to . . . study. I didn't know how to study. My Black English professor taught me how to write. She just insisted that I knew." In the presence of a mentor, Dee might have been advised from early on how to study or how to write. She understood all too well the void of a mentor and communicated this truth with pain in her voice as she conveyed a situation she viewed as racism.

You couldn't get into the school unless you were super bright. And I feel like it had to do with some implicit bias racism, to be honest. Because I feel like, why did I not get opportunities if I was in a college-prep program? I didn't have the school kind of nurturing and mentoring to say, "Hey, you should be applying to these programs," or, "Let's take a look at what your interests are." I didn't have that kind of support despite having the top grades. And so my kind of journey took longer.

Similarly, Renee shared her experience with a mentor, or lack thereof. She described a situation she experienced in high school when she needed someone, a mentor, to help her negotiate unfamiliar racial dynamics, understand the intricacies of the majority culture she was living amongst, and help her develop a sense of self-advocacy. Renee stated,

I had such a difficult time in high school because I was at a predominantly White high school, and they had just changed what they called zoning. . . . So for me, it was slightly a struggle for me because I didn't quite understand that culture and I didn't understand how to fit in. So, I knew that I was smart, but I just didn't know, like I said, how to really adapt to that. I knew that I was going to need some support, but I didn't know how to get that support, or should I say, I didn't know how to ask for that support. . . . So, some of the things that I would ask at times would be for some help, and then I wouldn't get it. So then, I was turned off from asking for any help after that from some of the teachers .... So

that was just a very hard time for me, and it wasn't until I think I got to my junior year that I had my first African American male teacher, and he taught history: . . . "I'm going to take care of you, and I'm going to help you, and I'm going to show you what you need." . . . So, he was my first mentor, and so I ended up developing a relationship with him and getting very close with him.

After not having a mentor, the thought of someone saying, "I see you," "I got you," or "You are not alone" can be life-defining.

Retrospectively Debra realized, for her, working hard academically, valuing education, and having academic goals were values she was not taught. She realized that her parents could not guide her academically, nor could they teach her these concepts, but a mentor could have filled that void. She stated,

I was just getting enough because I didn't know how . . . to work hard academically. I didn't know how to put forth that much interest in academics, much less effort. Right? So, I still hung out a lot, played a lot. . . . I finished [school] not having anything to do, not knowing what I was going to do because I don't have those type of mentors in my life. My mother knew that I needed an education. . . . My dad was a sanitation worker. . . . My mother was a mental health worker without a degree. So, they didn't have these career paths set out. So I didn't have a lot of people in my life that said, "This is the next phase."

A mentor or an experienced trusted adviser, could have been beneficial to Debra by showing her the next steps (Bryant et al., 2005, DeWitz et al., 2009; Di Pierro, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014).

Debra also communicated the difference between an encourager and a mentor: Someone to say, "You can do it" is an encourager, but someone who says "and this is how" is a mentor.

Debra's goal was not thwarted by the absence of a mentor, but it was delayed. These three interview participants experienced the lack of a mentor early on, while Brenda and Victoria shared what a mentor did in their lives to facilitate their persistence in the academy and overcoming of external barriers.

### ***Intentional Mentorship***

Intentional mentorship can be defined as deliberate mentorship, or mentorship done on purpose. Brenda and Victoria shared what their mentors did and said that assisted their persistence in the academy. Brenda's story demonstrated the difference between an encourager and a mentor as well but specifically shows the power of a mentor as a guide. She reported the experience of having a mentor who presented options she had previously been oblivious to.

My advisor, who just so happened to be my first semester teacher as well, we had a really close connection. She was a Black woman. My last semester, I met with my advisor, and she's like, "I think the next step for you is getting a doc." For me, I couldn't imagine myself as a doctor. One, because no one in my family had gotten a doctorate. Let alone, no one had gotten the masters at that time. I was just wanting to be done with school. Brenda's mentor opened new options that she knew of that Brenda had not previously entertained.

The informal learning offered by others to these interview participants obviously impacted them during their formative years, but the opportunity to have someone's advanced knowledge and experience imparted during professional development years was also a shared experience simplifying persistence in the CES professorate for these interview participants. Brenda's mentor educated her concerning professional development requirements. Brenda stated,

One of my mentors who I worked very closely with when I was teaching courses and doing my dissertation—we still are very close—I was fortunate in that I was one of the students who forged a really good relationship. . . . Things like writing and collaborating on research things, or going to conferences, I think that was one of the first things I didn't quite understand about this whole field. . . . I was able to talk to her and say, "I need somebody to explain this to me."

Brenda's mentor guided her to and through the unknown or unfamiliar. A critical part of Brenda's professional development was writing and collaborating, and she had a guide through this phase.

While many situations may require that mentors resemble the demographics of the mentee (e.g., negotiations through racial- or gender-specific assaults), that is not always the case. Brenda stated,

Most of my mentors were white women. So I think that brought a little bit of a different lens for me. . . . So having mentors definitely helped me kind of normalize the process and understand some of the unwritten rules, or some of that almost like social capital that no one talks about until you're kind of in it and you're like, "Did anybody else go through this?" . . . I knew that I could talk to her if I had questions that I maybe didn't want to say to other people for fear of looking stupid.

While Brenda was able to find reassurance in mentors who were White, she also discovered it in those who were Black—those who could speak to some very specific cultural dynamics.

I was able to connect with another Black woman who became a very close confidant during those months where I was still there and was being targeted for being a Black woman. That mentorship meant the world. . . . This sounds horrible, but I felt better that



it was normal for me to have this experience. Because before that, I was thinking, “I’m not cut out for this. I am not good enough for this.” But once I talked to those Black women about the experience and I was able to continue to have those conversations, I cannot say how that held me those couple of months I was at that institution.

Brenda understood that intentional mentors, regardless of color, could assist her in meeting wide-ranging needs whether professional or personal. She also understood the need for mentors who shared her experienced reality, other Black women who understood her plight because they shared it. Victoria also reported knowing the value of mentorship and mentors very early.

### ***Mentors Pursued***

Victoria pursued mentors. She understood that when mentors did not present themselves to her, she needed to actively pursue them. When asked if she always looked for mentors or if they presented themselves, she responded,

I looked for them. I knew as an undergrad student that I needed a mentor. Then growing up, this whole idea of community in [state] for African Americans, especially first-generation college students and poor students, there’s a big push to connect them with professionals and provide them mentoring in . . . professionalism. So there were people around me always talking about mentors, and the next step, and things like that as far as education. So, I knew that a mentor was valuable.

Victoria also acknowledged that her own progression was the result of seeing things done in front of her as well. From her Ph.D. to the professorate, progression was modeled, and she followed the lead set before her. This dynamic is similar to Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription and compromise which suggests that careers and opportunities observed,

particularly by kids during their formative years, become possible options for them as adults (Brown & Lent, 2013). Victoria explained,

I knew it by example and observation. So I worked as a TA throughout all of my master's program into doctoral program. Part of that, sometimes, I was the graduate assistant that worked in the office, administrative office. So I was able to see and hear other professors talking, and it was around admissions topics and all that type of stuff and financial aid. So just being in the environment of academia, working on campus was one way, and then directly asking my mentor, "What do I do next?" . . . So it was through his mentoring and guidance that I kind of went through a step-by-step process.

The belief that mentors were instrumental in allowing these interview participants to persist in the academy and overcome barriers in their lives was enough for Renee, Dee, and Brenda to actively become mentors themselves.

### ***Becoming Mentors***

Making the decision to become mentors to others was a direct result of the experiences had by some interview participants. Renee, Dee, and Brenda were impacted by the fact that they had trusted advisers (mentors) who were instrumental in providing professional and personal guidance in their lives (Bryant et al., 2005, DeWitz et al., 2009; Di Pierro, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014). As a result, they became mentors to others in order to provide the support they had.

Renee became a mentor in an attempt to affect the lives of others in a similar manner that positive mentoring affected her. She discussed the concept of paying it forward:

I think opening myself up to be a mentor. I think that [submitting to a mentor first] has a lot to do with it too. I've even received personal cards from students. I mean, they've only had me for one class, and I've received personal cards from them. I mean,

handwritten personal cards to say how grateful they are that I was their professor and that I even helped them to make certain decisions as it relates to the direction in which they're ready to go in their life as they finish their counseling graduate degree or counseling doctorate degree.

Renee, as a young woman, had little vision on her own of what she could do or who she could be. She persisted through life and in the academy and overcame barriers by peering through the lens of her family, submitting to the suggestions of spiritual leaders, and ultimately becoming an example for others to follow.

So I followed [my uncle] because I knew that he was the one person in my family that I was able to see that was reaching higher heights, and I knew that if I was going to get to that level, I needed to get under somebody that was doing it.... if you think about my family history, none of the women went to college, and so I wasn't thinking about that. So then, my pastor, said, "Let me tell you something. It is going to be a benefit to you to go to college." He said, "I need you to try." He said, "Go ahead and apply." Then, . . . even when I came back from [state] after I had reached all these achievements and these accolades, and I came back to my community where I was raised, you would think that I was a celebrity, I mean, because literally, that's the way that they treated me because many of them had never seen anyone succeed at the level in which I succeeded.

Renee acknowledged the power of a visual role model—a tangible representative. She was honored to then have that role. Her very presence could serve as an example for others to reach toward and perhaps follow.

Dee experienced a similar pleasure. She reported a true love for her job that facilitated her desire to mentor. She said,

I love being a professor. I still, I'm in relationship with a lot of students supporting their moving forward. . . . Actually, one of our alumni, I was able to get her hired as a licensed graduate counselor, her first job post-degree. I'm very excited about some of the work that I'm doing in supporting others. . . . I always have done mentoring through my 25 years as a professor.

Brenda realized her life calling through the encouraging words of a mentor/advisor. She was less familiar with the profession of counselor education, but once she persisted in the academy herself, she desired to mentor others in that discipline. She explained,

I think what attributed to that [being able to see her own calling] was my advisor for sure. She was one of the first people to really bring it to my attention. No one else had really brought it up to me. . . . In all honesty, if I'm really thinking about it, it was her kind of encouragement to say, "Hey, this is..." Because I didn't know it was an option to be honest. I didn't know that there were people who taught counselors how to be counselors.

Brenda acknowledged that she wanted to do more than simply teach counselors. She reported a strong desire to teach African American counselors because of their underrepresentation in the profession. She believed that a key to challenging underrepresentation is modeling persistence in front of others so they could witness the perceived impossible become possible. She stated,

I think one of the biggest things for our students as well as for me . . . [is] seeing Black people teaching them, that does something. . . . So for me to stand up in front of that class, I think that does something to I think both of our spirits. It does for me. . . . But I love the fact that I am going to teach underrepresented counselors who will then go out and they will work with underrepresented populations that look like us. Because we need more Black counselor educators. . . . We need more counselors too. If they want to be a

counselor educator, I am just all for it. I tell them we can have a conversation about some of the things they will experience, but we need more. But it gives me so much joy that I have the privilege to be a part of Black counselors going into the field.

The connection between Brenda's statement and Dee's photovoice was synergistic. Brenda's statement about teaching underrepresented counselors aligned with Dee's photovoice (Appendix K), The Quilt, which represents reaching out (hands) to bring other Black children and adults higher.

Five of the six interview participants, Dee, Renee, Debra, Brenda, and Victoria, all communicated mentorship experiences that were instrumental in their persistence in the academy and overcoming of barriers. Three of the interview participants shared their pain of not having a mentor early on, while two of them shared success as the result of having a mentor. The actions of the mentors in these reports were directive and informative, directing their mentees where to go and what to do. The impact was such that Renee, Dee, and Brenda all became mentors to assist up-and-coming counselors in their own journeys while persisting in the academy, overcoming barriers and pursuing their callings in counselor education. The idea of having a mentor is a well discussed phenomenon and the interview participants of this study also shared that in addition to having mentors, the belief in concepts of calling and gifts motivated them to persist in the academy and overcome barriers.

### **Belief in Concepts of Calling and Gifts**

Literature often interchanges the words "calling" and "purpose" (DeWitz et al., 2009), but for the purpose of this study, I will make use of the word used by the interview participants: calling. Calling in this context has a somewhat spiritual connotation. The idea of hearing a deep inner voice or being pulled by an invisible force was the experience four of the six interview

participants related when they addressed one reason they persisted in the academy, the professorate, and counselor education.

Persisting in an endeavor offering neither fame nor fortune can often be exhausting. It would seem the interview participants in this study discovered something that facilitated their persistence in the academy, and overcoming of barriers, more than fame or fortune could—it was a calling. The interview participants also related the sense of calling with being gifted, skilled and/or talented. Dee, Renee, Debra, and Victoria reported that calling and gifting provided direction and academic prowess, and enabled goal attainment. Dee simply stated, “I was called into counseling,” and “I felt more called to helping people who aren’t materially resourced or have the same opportunities.” She further elaborated by saying,

My biggest successes, I think, number one is walking with God and living the kind of life that He’s calling me to do every day. So I decided that I really wanted to get advanced clinical skills so that I could do more community work. . . . And it was for me, the best merge of faith and spirit and psychology because my call, I felt, was really to bridge the gap, particularly with cultural communities who don’t rely on mental health-seeking in the same ways that majority communities have.

The idea of calling suggests that the direction these women have chosen, counseling and counselor education, was not an arbitrary decision but an inspired one. Dee continued and explained it this way:

When I was a college counselor, you know, I was working in a community college that was one of the richest counties in the state and there was a lot of privilege among citizens in this county. And you know, you had the brightest schools, you have the best educational system in the state, . . . but also one of the best in the country. And I was

working as a college counselor there, and there was a large international immigrant population, and I was really enjoying interacting in this very cultural, multicultural community because through my early career, while it hadn't been that long, I took leadership in helping students understand race and racial awareness. . . . And I felt like my gifts that God had given me, it wasn't calling me to help a privileged community because I felt like they were going to be okay.

The concept of calling (hearing a loud cry) appears to partner closely with the idea that the person who is called is then given gifts to accomplish a task. The task in this case is being part of the counselor education professorate.

Renee was neither perplexed nor apprehensive about her gift, the giver of the gift, or her calling.

I really prayed about it and looked at my gift areas, what I believe that my gift areas are that God has given me, and two of my primary gift areas are the gift of encouragement and the gift of teaching. So it just made sense, number one, for me to become a counselor educator because that's encouragement and teaching together, and then it made sense for me to pursue being a professor so that I could see more of what my gift has to offer. . . . so that really fostered a passion in me at the time. I didn't know it was my gift area, but it fostered, I thought, at the time of just a passion in me as it related to mental health.

Renee was asked to explain what she meant by a gift. She followed up by explaining what constitutes a gift for her:

So I really just can't say, Sharon. It's a gift, and I know that many people, they may go to college for a degree in something, but just because you go to college and get a degree in something, it doesn't mean that is your gift, and so we really have to be able to identify if

something is our gift because you will know when something is your gift because it's what you do the very best with the least amount of effort, and I teach with the least amount of effort. So when I go out to train, I'm already teaching. That's why I love training. I love doing webinars. I love doing presentations out in the community. I mean, I love it, and I do it with no effort.

This sense of calling and gifts gave direction to Dee and Renee but provided academic prowess to Debra. Debra simply stated, "Apparently, I do have some natural gifts for learning .... I had some natural gifts for academics." As a result of her academic prowess, Debra was able to persist academically while she pursued higher education and ultimately the professorate. Victoria reported that her gifting allowed her to obtain her professional goals. She stated,

A counseling program that they had at [university] that was designed . . . for Christian leaders to impact the world, and that really resonated with me. It still resonates big time now. That really connected the dots for kind of what I was geared for, how God created me and gifted me to how I can get to that end goal of being a master counselor.

These four interview participants claimed that having a clear calling and gifts suited for the task of counselor education helped them by either giving them direction or academic prowess or by enabling goal attainment and contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of external barriers. Some of the interview participants also reported they believed they could not easily accomplish these callings without the support of others, particularly their families.

### **Presence of Encouragers and Positive Family Support**

Encouragers are those who built confidence in the interview participants by offering words of validation and support. According to five of the six interview participants, these



encouragers were often family supporters who attempted to make the interview participants' professional and personal journeys easier to bear. Encouragers gave support and instilled confidence and hope through allowing autonomy, taking time to listen, and speaking words of affirmation. For this theme, the support to persist refers to professional persistence in the academy.

The interview participants agreed that it was the positive family support they received that helped them persist in the academy. While the questions the interview participants were asked were expansive, the fundamental goal of this researcher was to ascertain if there were shared experiences held by these African American female CES professors that contributed to their persistence in the academy. The concept of positive family support was clearly communicated by the interview participants although they were not asked if they felt supported by their family, nor were they asked if their families support(ed) them; the idea of family support arose organically without researcher influence. The question asked during the semi-structured interviews regarding family related to the participants' family of origin's educational background and values concerning education, but the responses offered were about the family support given to the interview participants.

Debra, Dee, and Victoria reported that support came mainly from a spouse. Dee and Renee identified their positive family supporters as strong female leaders and Renee also gave special mention to her grandmothers. Brenda acknowledged her mother as an encourager and positive family support.

Debra, who experienced a lot of community success for programs she developed in her university and for the community, added,

And even when I say I don't, . . . about making my own rules or whatever, my husband supports me. If I get fired today, I'm still going to eat. So, I do want to acknowledge that I think I'm not just this magical person, this badass; I have support to be who I am. So, I don't look for a lot of support from my peers in the institution and all that stuff because I have a different built-in support.

The interview participants stated that the words of their encouragers felt sacred, sometimes combining a sense of pride and reverence simultaneously. In response to my statement, "So, I think what I just heard is that they [parents] were probably two of your most adamant encouragers," Debra responded,

Yeah, my parents definitely. . . . Like I said, once I got to college, then they were my biggest encouragers. Failure was simply not an option. It just wasn't going to happen. At that point, I was afraid [reverential fear] to disappoint them. So, I didn't want to disappoint them. So, in that sense, yeah, they were definitely my motivators. But I had lots of motivators. I shouldn't say I had lots, but I had important influencers in my life and in my education and people who supported me.

Debra's encouragers disallowed her quitting college by reminding her that failure was not an option. The idea of being pushed and pulled, encouraged by figurative shoving and hauling, by others was a motivating factor for Debra.

Without knowing what other participants stated, Dee shared that she persisted through chronic illness, loss, trauma, and racism with the support of her family, particularly her husband. She echoed Debra by saying,

My faith, talking to God a lot. Also talking a lot and getting support from my family and friendship networks, especially my husband, on a daily basis, having to be frustrated

being in the academy, coming home, talking about the microaggressions that were constant.

Dee also acknowledged the powerful presence and influence of strong female leaders including her mom. She added that as a single mom, her mom's strength was not a luxury but was required for her to head her household well.

My mom was the sole head of the house, so I grew up with a strong female leader at the forefront of my home, and I didn't grow up with men, basically, models leading other than seeing my granddad and my uncle, great uncle who they helped my mom as much as they could.

Dee's mother bore the weight of single parenthood in order for Dee to have a better chance in life. The impact of having others bear a weight and offer rest resounded in the interview participants' comments. A familiar line from a poem, "I come as one, but I stand as ten thousand," (Angelou, 2015) which suggests the tremendous influence behind the scenes of one's life, many who will never be known by others, but who are instrumental in the success of these interview participants, seems to fit Victoria's experience with family support.

Victoria stated that her husband, essentially, single-parented their children while she pursued her professional goals. Support for her children was identified as being of major importance for Victoria, and their well-being was imperative for her to persist in her career.

I intentionally have supports there for crisis that I can't make it to because I might be someplace else, speaking or whatever, and then people just to support my children in their growth as a whole. Without those situations, I mean this whole thing could just unravel.

Victoria also shared about additional encouragers in her life, and her mother topped the list.

Of course, my mother was a good encourager. She also often put just seeds of, even though you finished your master's degree, it seems like you're going to get a doctoral degree. She actually passed away before she knew I was even accepted. . . . Then another encourager would have been my husband. . . . Then the other encourager would be my mentor, who was also a professor. No discouragers. . . . It's interesting because my mom, . . . she specifically articulated, even when I went to undergraduate, she said, "I don't know how to lead you at this point because I haven't obtained an undergrad and I don't know how to." She didn't say, "I don't know how to study." She didn't know how to study, but basically, she was saying, "You'll need to look for other people to help guide you and mentor you."

Although Victoria's mother died before much of what Victoria would accomplish had come to fruition, she depicted the encouragement she received from her mother was in the as seeds that grew in her life. This concept of seeds was present in Victoria's photovoice entry (see Appendix J). Victoria's photo displayed a small tree with great potential for growth. She entitled it, "A Planting of the Lord to Display His Splendor." She identified herself as the tree, strong and magnificent with the ability to persist through barriers and ultimately realizing her full potential.

Continuing with the concept of persistence, often, the interview participants related that they persisted in the academy and overcame barriers not simply with the help of others, but in some cases *for* others. Renee recounted a moment between she and one of her family supporters, her grandmother:

She was letting me know how much pain she was in, and I was telling her, and I said, "Well, grandma," I said, "What I really want you to understand is that, of course, I'm not selfish, and I know that if you're really in pain, and you want to let go, and allow God to

do what he needs to do, and if that means take you to glory, I understand that.” I said, “But what I really want you to know is that you’ve given me everything that you could give me, and now it’s up to me to take that, and to use that, and move forward,” I said, “because I am your legacy.” . . . She let me know how much she admired me, and admired my relationship with God, and admired my tenacity, and ambition, and drive, and education, and everything that I was doing, and made sure to let me know.

Renee concluded her thoughts concerning this topic by describing the strong female influences in her life:

I was very close to my grandparents, so both of my grandmothers. But the two of them, very ambitious women, very tenacious women, and just really, really strong, strong-headed women that knew what they wanted and knew what they had to do to get it.

Being ambitious, tenacious, and strong-headed were more than simply desired characteristics for Renee’s grandmothers, but as Renee discovered for herself to persist in the academy, they were needed characteristics.

Another participant, Brenda, received powerful words of encouragement from her mother, which she reported gave her strength to persist.

So I ended up telling my mom I wanted to come back home, and my mom said, “No. You have to finish the semester.” It was more of a, “You need to figure it out. What’s going on? This isn’t like you, but I want you to push through.”

According to Brenda, the encouragement she received from her mom was soft spoken, without reproach, and not harsh, but authoritative with the underlying message that she needed to persist.

Brenda had her mother, Debra, Dee and Victoria had spouses to assist in their persistence and Renee had, her grandmother. These encouragers were described as unsung heroes. These

unsung heroes and, in some cases, heroines were the encouraging voices behind the scenes for the interview participants of the study. Common experiences which contributed to the persistence of the interview participants in the academy were the whispers of these well-wishers.

## **Barriers**

Though mentors, calling and gifts, and positive family support were evident in the lives of the interview participants, they still encountered barriers that threatened their persistence in the academy. Barriers are broadly defined as roadblocks, obstacles, or hindrances which prevent individuals from reaching a goal, accomplishment, or successful completion of a task. In the context of this study, it is known that barriers affecting African American female faculty can be historical (racism in the United States; Ford, 2011), cultural (race and gender; Baggerly et al., 2017) or systemic (institutional; Pittman, 2010) Internal barriers are self-imposed, not imposed by an external force, while external barriers are superimposed, they originate from an outside source. The question asked of the six interview participants was, “What were the factors you had to overcome? Although from different backgrounds all interview participants reported encountering external barriers.

External barriers are those factors which exist in one’s environment that are designed to hinder and/or prevent a person from achieving a goal or accomplishment. Of the six interview participants, all six described incidences of external barriers that they had to overcome in order to persist in the academy. Their lived experiences intertwine, as all six of the interview participants experienced incidences which triggered strong negative emotions. They acknowledged that for them, life does not exist without barriers, but in the face of those barriers, they persisted. The barriers the interview participants persisted through included challenges with

racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and the realities of intersectionality and minority status.

### ***Encountered Racial Discrimination***

Four interview participants reported encountering the external barrier of racism. Coleman (2005) defined racism as discrimination by race. Debra, Brenda, Dee, and Victoria had much to say about this subject, as is clear in these passages. Debra reported believing minimal diversity and widespread racism were continually prevalent in the CES professorate for African American females. She reported concern when non diverse faculty taught diversity courses. She believed diverse perceptions that were the result of race, better conveyed the challenges within the Black community and non-Black populations who taught diversity courses missed such intricacies and sometimes did not recognize that these intricacies existed. When asked why she believed this was the case, Debra responded,

White people give themselves way more credit than they deserve on where they stand with diversity. So, people are not critical thinkers when it comes to diversity. And so when you have White people teaching diversity classes or a diversity thing, they assume they're diverse; they think it's real. So, I don't think that they really understand the need.

Debra elaborated that minimal diversity causes her to stand out, and that her presence is sometimes alarming. She was asked a follow-up question inquiring why she believed her very presence caused such reactions from others. She answered,

Because conversations have to change. And sometimes you go so long, and you're silent so long, people will forget. If you don't speak up every now and again, people will for real not see color. And then you say something it's like, "Oh right, she's Black." Don't get it twisted. Just because I haven't said anything in the last couple of weeks, I hear

everything you say. If there's going to be some dissension in a room, in a faculty meeting, oftentimes it's because this Black person in the room sees things differently than these other six white people. Right?

She continued by explaining the efforts she made to disarm others in terms of facilitating their acceptance of her diversity and to make herself appear safe for them. While the efforts seemed skillful, they were hard to appreciate because it was sad that she had to resort to such measures. She reported that she has learned to neutralize herself, and when asked exactly how she did that she stated,

I smile more; I talk more; I do more small talk, which I don't really . . . most of the time, quite frankly, I'm not in the mood. Because I realize every time I come here, I'm doing shit that [has] nothing to do with my community, nothing. The people don't want to work in my community; the students don't want to work in my community. And I don't have a lot of students who look like me; every time I do, they're in trouble. So that's why again, I've learned to find my own space, do my own thing, and I just want to be left alone. But in fairness, that's not what people pay me for. So, I do my best to be more present with the people and try and meet them in a space that I can tolerate for the time that I'm here.

Brenda shared that her experience of racism was exhibited through subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, microaggressions (insults and/or assaults on the person or an individual of racial diversity; Constantine et al., 2008). Brenda initially wore her hair straightened but decided that she wanted to present as authentically as possible. As a result, she began to wear her hair natural, and as a Black woman with natural, kinky, curly hair she was all the more different from her White colleagues. Her photovoice selections were both a celebration of her Blackness; one is a picture of her natural hair and the other is her commonly worn shirt with the word "Melanin" on



it (Appendix J). Brenda, who had not experienced microaggression before, upon being microaggressed was not sure what the treatment was she was experiencing. Her White colleague informed her that she was the victim of such attacks:

ACA had that all-Black panel of African American women who were talking about their experience. Then I had gone to another presentation that again, Black women talking about their experiences in counselor education specifically. That was what the common theme was that we were at the bottom of the totem pole and women of all different ranks, so full professor, assistant, associate, a dean, were all experiencing microaggressions, very overt kinds of racism at their institutions, research schools, for-profit, everywhere. So it's going to happen. It's kind of what the theme was for me. But when it happened to me, it took me a minute to kind of recognize it. At that point because I didn't have a lot of mentors who looked like me, I wasn't quite sure if it was the right thing, I think for me. Although one of my peers, she pointed that out. She's like, "I think this is what it is." I was like, "Oh, I don't know." It just didn't sink in. But she initially said that, a White woman.

Brenda's experience speaks to the truth that the responsibility of identifying and challenging racism should not purely rest on the shoulders of the African American female CES professors. The interview participants were not deceived in thinking that racism only existed in secular institutions, but in faith-based institutions as well. Faith-based institutions, in this context, are those organizations which adopt a belief in Christian values.

Dee and Victoria recounted stories affirming that racism in faith-based institutions also represented barriers to African American females in the CES professorate that they needed to

overcome. Dee encountered racism early on, as a doctoral student in CES, and as a result, she knew she needed to persist through it in order to enter the CES professorate. She reported,

I encountered a lot of racism in my doctoral program, even in a faith institution. And I encountered a lot of White professors, European-descent professors who weren't used to being in a relationship with someone of color who was just as bright as they are. . . . And I've met a lot of racism and I don't think that they were aware of their implicit bias.

Dee also articulated believing that diversity issues and racism are not always the result of venom in the hearts of others, but they are sometimes simply the result of ignorance. She believed racism may be created in the hearts and minds of the very young by a society insensitive to its damage.

I had also learned that there are good people in the world who are racist, that they are conditioned from their own environments in many ways like trauma that they have developed the childhood disease of racism and sexism and et cetera and privilege.

Victoria experienced racism in a faith-based institution, which was disturbing to her because she thought her shared beliefs made her more similar to those around her than different. She added, "Another thing is that even though I'm a conservative Christian, I probably don't look to them [other students] what a conservative Christian should look like." Victoria was referring to her physical appearance as a Black woman in an environment where no one else looked like her, nor correctly interpreted her mannerisms or her sense of humor. Despite the fact that racism existed in faith-based institutions, as well as other institutions, this reality did not deter these interview participants from persisting. The external barrier of racism was a barrier these interview participants needed to overcome, but feelings of loneliness and invisibility were also challenging.

### *Feelings of Loneliness and Invisibility*

Feelings of loneliness, a sense of being isolated and alone, and invisibility, the contradiction of being bodily seen, but not having one's input heard or perceived as valuable (Bryant et al., 2005), were reported by interview participants as external barriers they had to overcome. Dee, Brenda, Debra, and Pam shared their experiences with feelings of loneliness and invisibility. The feelings of loneliness that may arise for African American female professors in CES also affects African American students because both populations are scarce in academia (Jones & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). In response to the interviewer's statement "And then you say that it is frustrating in the academy for Black women, tell me what you mean by that," "Dee gave a detailed explanation about what it felt like to be the unseen and the unvalued. She began and ended her statement with the concepts of loneliness and being alone. She stated,

One is very lonely. Somebody wrote a book that I actually bought, but I never read it. It was authored by a Black woman in the academy that came about from research, qualitative interviews with people of color in the academy. I couldn't read it. It was too traumatizing for me. I'm already dealing with the trauma of trying to breathe every day in the academy. . . . These insidious daily micro-assaults on your very being. I just couldn't read the book. . . . There's some books I'm just not able to read. It's just too much stimuli. But it's very lonely and that's basically what people share. . . . I felt very alienated; that's why I had a strong support system outside of the department. . . . You're on an island by yourself. You're alone; people don't interpret your behaviors well.

Dee further shared about being in a meeting and voicing her opinion regarding an issue she cared about. It was during that meeting that Dee was told by her department chair that she was being

aggressive. Dee stated, “People were misinterpreting my message.” She elaborated that a White colleague defended her and challenged the department chair, who was also a White female, by saying, “People interpret it [Dee’s behavior] as anger or aggression.” Dee stated that her colleague understood that the same behavior by a White person would not have been interpreted the same way Dee’s behavior was. Dee, and seemingly her colleague, believed Dee’s behavior was regularly interpreted through a racist lens. Dee concluded, “I actually left because of the racism and the lack of support.” Dee reported being appreciative of her colleague who came to her rescue, but she also reported being sad that she needed defense from someone else. The pain reported by Dee was visceral, evident even by phone. The striking reality was that her feelings of isolation and loneliness were in relation to how she felt among her peers. She added that this concept of loneliness revealed itself throughout the academic process, from the doctoral experience through tenure, especially around pivotal advancement opportunities. She had to negotiate most experiences alone:

And so that’s what led me to the Ph.D. Because I wanted to teach, I want to do clinical work, and I wanted to write and publish kind of in that order. And that’s what led me to becoming a professor but, to be honest, I didn’t really understand the whole tenure deal because I mean, tenure wasn’t designed for people of color. . . . And to be honest, I didn’t get any mentoring in my doctoral program to become a professor at all. I mean it’s just kind of, that’s what led me to do it but I think the White students were getting groomed for more opportunities and I was like the Lone Ranger person of color in all my classes until I met one of my closest friends now, [who] was the other person of color.

Dee shared the sentiment that she would not be ignored, suppressed, or silenced. She reported,

I basically was saying it unconsciously, you're going to see me whether you like it or not. I'm here. Look at me. I exist. Leadership is like, okay, there are a lot of people in the world, and you need to see us. . . . And you know, I guess I had to understand too that racism is alive and well and that it's not going to sort of work through as quickly as I would like.

Dee's choice to combat her loneliness was ultimately to leave the institution to find solace elsewhere. She reported feeling that she was devalued and therefore dismissed or banished. Her photovoice submission (Appendix J), "Being Banished to a Grungy Basement," aligned with her combating banishment and invisibility by suggesting "I do exist." The loneliness within some institutions was not the only concern, but the invisibility that African American female CES professors felt was also an external barrier that needed to be challenged in order for them to persist. Dee simply said, "I think the only thing I would want to end with is look at us. We are here. We count, see us, respect us. Know us."

In addition to Dee reporting feeling lonely and banished, Brenda stated because of her solo status when she encountered racial challenges, she had to find companionship outside of her institution because she was alone. Debra also stated she was alone as the only Black in her faculty meetings, and as a result, she often felt isolated. Pam also reported experiencing a sense of invisibility. The idea of invisibility in this sense has an almost political connotation—invisibility in that no power has been afforded and often no voice is allowed. Pam spoke to this by saying,

I say what I see, and the way that I deal with the invisibility is defiance, I would say. . . . I'm the kind of a person that if I walk into a room, I kind of have the air of, "You know you see me. You can try to ignore me, and you don't have to like me, but you see me." . .

. Like kind of an impeccable personal stance is an edge against invisibility because you don't have to like me, but you will not ignore me.

While Pam spoke forcefully, the pain of being treated as a child, seen but not heard, was evident. These interview participants expressed painful feelings associated with not being seen or acknowledged mainly due to their minority status.

### ***Realities of Intersectionality and Minority Status***

The truth of African American females' cultural makeup is their intersectionality, the idea that they have multiple points of inequality, namely their race and their gender (Bright et al., 2016; Gillborn, 2015). Intersectionality is therefore inclusive of culture and minority status. Four of the interview participants expressed challenges negotiating their intersectionality and their minority status.

Renee expressed her challenge with barriers concerning intersectionality this way:

Sometimes you don't want to jump to conclusions when you know that there is a barrier, there is a challenge that may be related to your culture, especially when it's at a predominantly White institution. You don't want to jump to that conclusion and say, "What? Is it because I'm a woman? Is it because I'm African American, or is it because I'm both?" So sometimes you have to kind of let the situation play itself out to see if you can identify which one. Sometimes situations will play itself out in such a way that you will know beyond a shadow of a doubt which one it is, and then sometimes you just don't know, but you know it was something.

This idea of intersectionality is a reality that all of the interview participants shared.

Additionally, their minority status created a fair amount of challenges as well. Throughout Renee's interview, she was sure to share that culture and fit are important, and while others may

not persist at a particular university because it is not a good fit, they could continue to persist in the professorate once they have found that fit. She elaborated on culture when she was asked which factors she had to overcome during her journey. Here is her response:

I'm sure culture definitely has played a role because when you look at being an African American female, you're marginalized. You're marginalized because you're African American, and then you're marginalized because you're a woman. But of course, teaching other African Americans on campus in the African American community because that was my culture, I actually was able to continue to thrive even more, and again, because it's a Christian-based institution as well, our cultures, and our values, and some of our beliefs [were] the same.

Renee clarified that she was not suggesting one could only thrive in a same-culture, same-race environment, but that individuals thrive when it is a good fit, and that is when shared values and beliefs are present as well as a genuine acceptance (welcome and approval) of diversity, including intersectionality and others' minority status.

Pam reported barriers with her intersectionality as it relates to her minority status, or as the literature referred to it, solo status, or numeric minority status that was sometimes covertly or sometimes overtly expressed by others, namely the majority population (Chatman et al., 2008; Harley, 2008; Harris, 2012). Pam defined herself and her intersectionality:

I think I'm an interrupter. I interrupt the idea that Black women are here to serve the needs of other populations, whether it be Black men, non-Black people, your dinner.

Zora Neale Hurston . . . If you're the mule of the world, then you can carry it all, and you do it with style. Yeah, I'm unapologetically Black and female. Yeah, I wish you would. That's kind of my attitude and the way I show up, and it's also the way I'm received,

which, that hurts because I want to be embraced, but I don't want to be embraced and then patronized, so I'd rather be left alone.

By quoting Hurston, Pam was alluding to the stereotype of Black women as animals meant for labor but nothing else. Pam rebutted that declaration. She saw herself as more. She expressed concern with the term "minority" being used. She stated that the description did not communicate who she really was holistically, and it garnered unwarranted racism. She reacted more favorably to the term minoritized. When the term minoritized was offered as an alternative, Pam responded, "That's at least more appropriate because we're not minorities; we're minoritized, but I would use 'underserved.'" Pam shared her experience in a PWI: "The three years that I was there, the fact that I was a Black woman was a constant factor in my day-to-day kind of workings." She added, "So I think race and issues around racialized communities are alive and well in America." But her most adamant comment was this:

I have never been anywhere without one or the other. . . . I'm always a Black woman, right? For me, they hold the same space, and I believe when people deal with me, they're dealing with me in that space. When you got all these other things, colorism and class and all these other overlapping areas, but the two that are always, always there are "Black" and "female."

This experience for Pam further solidified her disadvantaged, underprivileged status.

Some of the interview participants identified culture as an external barrier they needed to defeat in order to persist in the academy. Cultural racism in America, unfortunately, was the foundation of America's inception, and as a result, there are institutions which maintain policies and practices that are antagonistic towards cultural minorities (Diggs et al., 2009; Levin et al.,



2013). Debra shared her experience with a PWI and the refusal of members of the predominant culture to embrace her cultural identity. Her words were disquieting.

People are very kind to you. People are not hostile, but it is certainly not a place where people are just going to carve out space for you, your culture, your cultural identities.

Like we welcome you here as long as you can fit in. That's what I would say the culture is. As long as you can fit in the culture that is here. But if you plan on being here, . . . and think that you're going to make big changes and strides in this culture, good luck.

Debra's frustration with the academy was due to the fact that she felt no space was going to be made for her cultural identities (Black and female).

Dee added to this concept by suggesting her very presence personifies intersectionality and minority status. She described her intersectionality as her Blackness followed by her femininity. She stated,

I tell people I'm six two-and-a-half feet tall. When you see me, you see a tall woman because you can't help but see me. But outside of that, what people see is that I'm a Black woman and that's how they respond to me. I tell people, nobody cares that I have a Ph.D. . . . They see me as a Black person, and that tends to set the trajectory on how they're going to interact with me in the relationship a lot of times. So there's things that I don't have control over how a person is going to judge me, evaluate me, try to communicate with me. . . . So then for me, for in terms of intersectionality, what is more prominent is my Blackness more than me being a female. For me in my journey of interacting in the world in the academy in particular, what people see more than they see anything is a person of color. The fact that I'm a woman is secondary. For me, this is I'm speaking what it has been for me. . . . It has not been the being a woman, more so being

Black. That kind of sets the stage for the interactions. . . . For me, what's important for me is I am a Black woman.

Encountering racial discrimination, experiencing feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and being subject to the realities of intersectionality and minority status are all things the interview participants of this study had to endure. They reported believing that not only would they encounter these external barriers, but that they had to overcome them in order to persist in the academy. They described persistence as a choice more than an innate quality.

### **Persistence**

While resilience can be defined as the ability to recover quickly, persistence relates to continuance to maintain until completion. The interview participants of this study persisted by continuing in the CES professorate despite challenges or barriers. Pam, Brenda, Debra, Victoria, Dee and Renee, despite opportunities to quit, persisted with the help of mentors, calling and gifts, and positive family support, in the face of racism, loneliness, invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status. In a study concerning African American professors, Allison (2008) stated that while the number of African American professors have not grown tremendously, they have persisted, and that is success. The themes listed earlier in this study of mentors who facilitated persistence and encouragers and positive family support for the interview participants came from external sources, but persistence is what they were required to do that no one else could do for them.

Concerning her ability to persist, Pam stated, "I never necessarily knew what I would accomplish, but I am persistent to . . . a fault, I guess. I'm like a drip of water, right, which will cut through a mountain." Pam continued her statement about persistence, reiterating the fact that it is a choice:

I'm not the type of person who's got it all planned out. I don't have a strong sense of "This is what I'm going to do," but once I start something, I'm going to continue it and I'm going to do it successfully. I'm going to leave a mark on it, right? Mediocrity is really not an option. Why do it if you're not really going to put your all into it? I haven't done everything excellently, but I've done it well.

Pam felt it necessary to paint CES in a very realistic manner. She began her comment addressing life experiences as well as experiences in the CES professorate. She reported needing to have to rise above challenges.

I'm all positive, but my life experiences have not been. [How do you rise above life?] What my dad would say, and you're going to make me cry . . . my dad would always say, "It beats the alternative." It beats the alternative, like letting all of this keep me under is just not an option. There's way too much to be done. Way too many people have invested and poured love and joy into me for me not to have my light on. Even if others can't see it, I have to keep it on for me.

Persistence is not persistence without an element of difficulty. According to the interview participants, completion without challenge is not persistence, but what these ladies reported was no easy task. According to Debra, her ability to persist was an instilled value, taught to her by her mother. She shared her motivation:

Interestingly, once I got to [institution], highly under-prepared, and wanted to quit, hated every minute of freshman year, really struggled and everything. Some values that my parents did have is. . . . and my mother has said to me like, "I don't care what you do, but whatever you choose to do," she said, "You can choose to do whatever you want to do. What you cannot do is quit once you're chosen." So, even though I didn't like it or didn't

care, . . . I could not quit. So when I called and said, “I’m coming home, I don’t like this,” she said, “No, you’re not.”

The reality about persistence communicated by the interview participants is that it is more about the internal image of who they perceived themselves to be. Persistence was not dependent upon their external supports but was dependent upon their internalized self.

Brenda revealed how her response to challenge and sometimes wanting to quit was to seek solace wherever she could in order to persist.

Definitely being able to talk to my friends. . . . We were peers. So she was adjuncting, and she had gone through the exact same experience. I had talked with her about how to handle this pretty much every class that she had. So she did that same process with me when I drove into work and when I left work. I called her every day because I had to be on campus four days a week. So four days a week, I was talking to her on my way there and on my way back. I also was able to tap into some White women more particularly... because for me, what that did was I put up a guard against White people to be honest. Maybe more so White women than White men now. I was really only comfortable talking with people of color to be honest. . . . Really, I think it was tapping into my circle that got me through and being able to focus when I was there. . . . Not to say I couldn’t grow as a counselor educator, but what was happening there that wasn’t about my skills, or my lack of skills or potential. It was about the institution.

All of the interview participants recounted how they persisted in the academy in the face of sure underrepresentation if they did not.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I revealed the findings from semi-structured qualitative interviews, as well as some photovoice submissions, conducted with six African American female CES professors as they disclosed their experiences in the CES professorate. As a result of the interviews conducted, themes and subthemes were uncovered. Themes of mentors facilitated persistence, beliefs in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family support, external barriers, and persistence and subthemes of external racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status were uncovered during a thematic analysis. Interview participant profiles were also provided in this chapter. While Chapter Four was the presentation of the findings only, the next chapter, Chapter Five, will present a thorough discussion of the findings as well as implications for the field of counseling and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Overview**

This study examined the lived experiences of six African American female CES professors (pseudonyms: Pam, Brenda, Debra, Victoria, Dee, and Renee) for the purpose of investigating African American females' underrepresentation in the CES professorate. Because of the quality of data desired, a qualitative phenomenology was utilized. All interview participants took part in semi-structured interviews while four of the six interview participants participated in a photovoice project (Appendix J) addressing the prompt, "what it feels like to be you as an African American female in the counseling education professorate."

Chapter One introduced the "why" of the study as well as the problem of underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate. The metaphor of "The Black ceiling" (McGirt, 2017) was introduced, a term that suggests suggesting that barriers exist which hinder the persistence as well as the advancement of African American females in organizations including academic institutions. Chapter One additionally introduced the research question, "What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors' experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers."

Chapter Two was an exhaustive review of literature search for literature addressing African American women in academia and revealed predominant themes of internal barriers and external barriers that include racism, oppression, discrimination, stereotyping, issues surrounding isolation, (in)visibility, dishonor, tenure, and mentoring. Additional literature highlighted concepts of attraction, recruitment, retention, persistence, and underrepresentation of African American female professors in academia, particularly CES.

Chapter Three thoroughly described the research design which included the collection, analysis, and conceptualization of data as well as the methodology (qualitative, phenomenology, with photovoice) used to study the underrepresentation of African American females in CES. Chapter Three also outlined the theoretical underpinnings of CRT, feminist theory, and Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise, used to address the gap in the literature concerning the underrepresentation of the purposeful participants (African American females in the CES professorate) of this study.

Chapter Four was a presentation of the findings revealed after a thematic analysis of source data (from semi-structured interviews and photovoice photos) which uncovered major themes. The primary themes uncovered were mentors facilitated persistence, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family support, external barriers, and persistence. Secondary themes of encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status were also discovered.

This chapter, Chapter Five, presents a thorough interpretation and discussion of the findings from chapter four's source data. The discussion will focus on the findings as they relate to the literature, and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Additionally, this chapter addresses the significance of the research findings, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further research.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The themes and subthemes from Chapter Four are further explicated in this chapter. The identified themes are mentors facilitated persistence, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family support, external barriers (encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, realities of intersectionality and minority status). These

themes will be further discussed in light of how they facilitate or hinder African American females' persistence in the CES professorate and how they facilitate or hinder the Black ceiling. All themes are further aligned with the problem identified, the conceptual framework, and the theoretical framework in Chapter One, the literature review from Chapter Two, and the research design from Chapter Three.

### **Themes**

While there were many concepts that recurred among the interview participants, those mentioned by most of the participants were deemed major themes for this research study. The significance of the themes is also apparent in the themes' direct connection to the research question. The idea that mentors facilitated persistence was cited by five of the six interview participants and will be explicated first.

#### **Mentors Facilitated Persistence**

The concept of mentorship is abundant in the academic literature as well as other sources. Chapter Two described mentorship as offering support (Bryant et al., 2005), sharing wisdom (Dowdy, 2008), investing time (Di Pierro, 2012; Ovink & Veazey, 2011; Thomas et al., 2014), and facilitating persistence (Hurtado et al., 2012). This primary theme, discussed by five of the six interview participants, reflected the ideas found in the literature and additionally proposed the concept of a mentor as someone who witnesses the struggle, but provide a safe place for growth (Griffin, 2012). The sentiment revealed in the literature that students of color depend on minoritized faculty for support (Griffin, 2016), but may not always receive it (Evans & Cokley, 2008) seemed to align with the findings of this work. As Dee stated, "I didn't have that kind of support despite having the top grades. And so my kind of journey took longer." It is important to



note that in this case, the absence of a mentor resulted in a longer journey, a finding which is consistent with the literature which highlights the value of a mentor.

The conceptualization for mentorship in the study was defined by the literature as the process by which a qualified, skilled, knowledgeable adviser supports and leads individuals in their professional and/or personal journeys (Bryant et al., 2005; DeWitz et al., 2009; Di Pierro, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014). Renee's mentor captured this idea when he said, "I'm going to take care of you, and I'm going to help you, and I'm going to show you what you need." Renee's intentional mentor was conveyed as a primary underpinning to her persistence.

The views from the interview participants revolved around the awareness that they possessed the raw materials for success, but they needed a skilled other to cultivate their greatness. Renee stated, "I was smart, but I just didn't know, like I said, how to really adapt...." Dee added, "I guess I could have gotten a 3.0 had I known how to . . . study." Brenda also reported her mentor stated, "I think the next step for you is getting a doc." The value of a mentor should not be underestimated, and the fact that this concept abounds in the literature remains noteworthy. The need for a mentor was reported by the interview participants to have begun early and continued throughout their professional journeys (Bryant et al., 2005, DeWitz et al., 2009; Di Pierro, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014). Mentors were described by interview participants as primary contributors to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of barriers. Seemingly, one clear element that facilitated persistence and contributed to weakening, if not breaking, the Black ceiling was the presence of an intentional mentor.

### **Beliefs in Concepts of Calling and Gifts**

In addition to mentors facilitating persistence, beliefs in concepts of calling and gifts additionally arose as a primary theme. Four of the six interview participants expressed the sense

or feeling of being pulled (figuratively called) into a predetermined purpose by God and given gifts (capacity) to fulfill a purpose. Frankl, when investigating student attrition, defined this sense of calling and gifts as meaning and purpose (as cited in DeWitz et al., 2009). That aligns with the interview participants' statements as well.

The interview participants used wording such as; "walking with God and living the kind of life that He's calling me to" (Dee), "I really prayed about it and looked at my gift areas, what I believe that my gift areas are that God has given me" (Renee), "how God created me and gifted me to how I can get to that end goal" (Victoria), and "I had some natural gifts for academics" (Debra). Not all interview participants associated calling and gifts to God, but they all believed their sense of calling and gifts enabled them to persist in the academy and break the Black ceiling.

This notion of calling and gifts did not arise in the literature review in Chapter Two of this work as a distinct concept, but instead was seen as an integral part of the Black experience. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two was helpful in terms of understanding the research problem. It provided a historical look at the Black experience underlying the current problem of underrepresented African American females in the academy. In one descriptive phenomenological study of five African American female professors, the themes which arose were systemic oppression at PWIs, external supports (mentoring), and internal coping mechanisms (persistence, spiritual/religious practices; Jones et al., 2015). Comparable to the women in this study, the women in the Jones et al. (2015) study referenced God and religious beliefs as a source of support. "They consistently expressed gratitude to a higher power in giving them strength to persist" (Jones et al., 2015, p. 144). This religious orientation was at the core of

many of the interview participants' belief systems and was additionally addressed by Chaney (2014) along with the concept of family strengths.

### **Encouragers and Positive Family Support**

Chaney (2014) described the strengths of Black families. The first of these strengths, according to Chaney, is support from the strong kinship bonds that Blacks receive and provide from biological and fictive family. The remaining four strengths are strong work orientation (origin in slavery to work hard), adaptability of family roles (malleability of Blacks to meet challenges of family life), high achievement orientation (desire for Blacks to excel despite barriers), and religious orientation (Blacks rely on religion, spirituality, and prayer for guidance [this concept supports the idea of beliefs in calling and gifts presented previously]). The sense of having encouragers and positive family support, according to Chaney (2014) facilitates the strong kinship bond that subsequently facilitates life resiliency. This dynamic was also communicated by five of the six interview participants of this study.

Researchers have held that positive family support could encourage academic persistence (DeWitz et al., 2009). Likewise, the interview participants reported that their encouragers and family supporters facilitated their academic persistence as well as their personal and professional persistence. Debra stated, "I have support to be who I am. ...built-in support. I had important influencers in my life and in my education and people who supported me." Dee added she received her support in, "talking a lot and getting support from my family and friendship networks." Victoria stated that her husband and her mother were supports for her, and in addition to them she stated, "I intentionally have supports." She knew for her to persist, her supports needed to be deliberate and calculated, not accidental, or by chance.

The idea of having encouragers and positive family support for African Americans, as highlighted in the conceptual framework, speaks to the sense of creating and/or following a path that facilitates racial uplift (Edghill-Walden et al., 2018). Education is particularly seen as an opportunity for advancement, not only for oneself, but for an entire group (Edghill-Walden et al., 2018). The interview participants shared the belief, which was consistent with the literature, that their encouragers and positive family support facilitated their persistence and overcoming of barriers, particularly the Black ceiling. They expressed their convictions that they were to glean from their supporters then to pay it forward. As Renee told her grandmother, “I am your legacy.” Mentors who facilitate persistence, beliefs in calling and gifts, and encouragers and positive family support, are all factors that allowed the interview participants to persist in the academy and overcome barriers.

### **External Barriers**

External barriers, in this study, are those obstacles that impede the advancement and/or persistence of African American females in the CES professorate. The idea of external barriers designed to deter upward movement (promotion) supports the concept of a ceiling. The ceiling addressed in Chapter One of this work, the Black ceiling (McGirt, 2017), represents the idea that the barriers faced by African American women are more difficult to break than those faced by women in general (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gamble & Turner, 2015). External barriers were reported by all six of the interview participants of this study. Broken into three subthemes, those barriers are encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status. While all the interview participants did not report experiencing all of the external barriers mentioned, they all reported experiencing some of them and yet persisting in the academy despite them.

## **Encountered Racial Discrimination**

Substantiated by the literature is the idea that many African American women encounter racial discrimination (prejudicial treatment on the grounds of race), and four of the interview participants of this study reported having experienced this situation (Baggerly et al., 2017; Bradley, 2005; Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Patton, 2004; Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 2008). Speight (2007), Delgado and Stefancic (2007), and Gillborn (2015) refer to racism as being ingrained and deep-rooted. Speight (2007) depicted racism as unseen as the water one swims in and the air one breathes, while Delgado and Stefancic (2007) and Gillborn (2015) described racism's existence as ordinary landscape.

The indignities of discrimination, oppression, racism and stereotyping are regularly experienced, particularly by African American female faculty (Bradley, 2005; Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Patton, 2004; Turner, 2002). One of the interview participants, Brenda, agreed with this assumption and added, "So it's going to happen. It's kind of what the theme was for me. But when it happened to me, it took me a minute to kind of recognize it." It appears for Brenda that acts of racism are still startling when they do happen.

Debra believed the issues of racism were so prominent because, as she put it, "people are not critical thinkers when it comes to diversity." If the processes of racism were truly understood, it would be expected and challenged. The literature expanded upon this sentiment and added that race and racism are considered endemic, permanent, and central (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Based upon this declaration more conscientious observers should be poised and ready to challenge racism.

When the interview participants shared their stories of racism, analogous to the literature, and the theoretical framework utilizing CRT, they agreed that racism silences the voices of marginalized ethnic and racial groups (Haskins & Singh, 2015; Solorzano et al., 2000). Despite its existence, the interview participants of this study continued to persist in the academy and overcame the Black ceiling that loomed over them. Understanding this dynamic in light of CRT adds a sense of clarity to the plight of these interview participants.

### **Feelings of Loneliness and Invisibility**

In addition to the theme of encountering racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness (feeling alone) and invisibility (symbolically unnoticed) were reported by four of the interview participants as external barriers. Loneliness is a subjective rather than an objective experience, it has more to do with the quality of one's relationships, not simply the quantity. The loneliness experienced by the interview participants was the result of them feeling alone, not being alone. Feelings of aloneness highlighted the sense of otherness manifested by all of the interview participants (Pittman, 2010). When Dee was describing her feelings of loneliness and invisibility in the academy she stated, "One it's very lonely," "I felt very alienated," "You're on an island by yourself," and "You're alone." Again, despite this external barrier the interview participants persisted.

The literature addresses additional challenges for African American female counselor educators that include issues of invisibility and/or over-visibility/hypervisibility highlighted solo status, and categorization as raced, gendered, and othered particularly in PWIs (Cartwright et al., 2009; Chang et al., 2013; Constantine et al., 2008; Ford, 2011; Perez & Carney, 2018; Turner, 2002). These subcategories for invisibility further differentiate African American females from others, creating a sense of disconnectedness. Some researchers have added that upon becoming

members of the academy, African Americans have acknowledged immense feelings of isolation and marginalization in their academic departments (Brooks & Steen, 2010; Turner et al., 1999). The reports from the interview participants in conjunction with the literature serve to validate the existence of these external barriers.

Both the interview participants and the literature asserted that the pattern of isolation and marginalization is real and highlighted that it is not a new truth, but one that has endured for many decades (Allen et al., 2000; Davis, 1999; Griffin, 2016; Harris, 2012; James & Farmer, 1993). Many reports suggest African American students experience feelings of loneliness and isolation, but these feelings are not limited to students (Glenn & Johnson, 2012; Hannon et al., 2016). After becoming faculty, African American faculty continue to acknowledge feelings of isolation and marginalization in their departments (Austin, 2002; Brooks & Steen, 2010; Turner et al., 1999).

The interview participants reported having to negotiate between loneliness and invisibility: the feelings of aloneness and powerlessness. They struggled with the paradox of being physically seen, but not perceived as having valuable contributions to make (Bryant et al., 2005). All interview participants reported having to challenge this dynamic. They acknowledged that these barriers made their journeys more difficult, but their mentors, callings, and support, helped them to persist. Pam addressed it this way, I'm the kind of a person that if I walk into a room, I kind of have the air of, "You know you see me. You can try to ignore me, and you don't have to like me, but you see me."

### **Realities of Intersectionality and Minority Status**

Intersectionality, the convergence of multiple points of inequality, is the daily lived experience of all the interview participants, but four expressly reported being particularly

challenged by their raced and gendered status (Bright et al., 2016; Gillborn, 2015). Renee reported oftentimes feeling confused about where certain challenges were originating from. She stated, “What? Is it because I’m a woman? Is it because I’m African American, or is it because I’m both?” The theoretical framework for this study highlighted CRT (Bright et al., 2016; Gillborn, 2015) and feminist theory (Airen, 2017; Crenshaw, 1989; Turner et al., 2008) and gave validity to the interview participants’ perceptions by recognizing their intersectionality and the subsequent challenges that can accompany it.

Ford’s (2011) research concurred with Renee’s report as it acknowledged that Black women experience multiple marginality (race and gender) in the academy because they are regularly required to interpret which race or gender lens to process experiences through (Harris, 2012). Renee described this phenomenon by saying that as an, “African American female, you’re marginalized. You’re marginalized because you’re African American, and then you’re marginalized because you’re a woman.” African American women generally present with this marginalized duality because their natural existence shows their intersectionality. Gendered racism is often the byproduct for these women when they encounter those who are intentionally or unintentionally racist. This double disadvantage creates an external barrier doubly reinforced (racism & sexism; Beckwith et al., 2016).

According to literature, gendered racism (racist sexism) can result in twofold rejections: one by race, the other by gender, is potentially the building block of the Black ceiling (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002; Collins, 2000; Pittman, 2010). Because multiple points of inequality can interrelate (Bright et al., 2016; Gillborn, 2015) those who have been minoritized must take a stand against the prejudices lodged against those identified by their intersectionality and minority status (Collins, 2000; Johnson & Richeson, 2009; Pittman, 2010). Pam decided to



do this by acknowledging, “I’m unapologetically Black and female. When you got all these other things, colorism, and class and all these other overlapping areas, but the two that are always, always there are “Black” and “female.” The interview participants’ persistence in the academy was an act of defiance against racism and discriminatory acts and caused these women to persist and overcome barriers while simultaneously disrupting the Black ceiling.

### **Persistence**

The Black ceiling, it appears, can be fortified, or dismantled as it interacts with themes presented in this study. The themes of mentors, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, and encouragers and positive family support all served to facilitate the interview participants’ persistence in the academy and dismantled the effects of the Black ceiling. The themes associated with the external barriers identified in this study of encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status appeared to fortify the Black ceiling. The concept of persistence, continuance on a course until the course is complete, is sometimes considered a personality trait and other times it is simply considered an action. All six of the interview participants appear to possess this trait (or action), and along with the assistance of mentors, a sense of purpose (calling and gifts), and support they persisted in the academy and overcame external barriers.

Jones et al. (2015) conducted a study with African American female faculty who demonstrated persistence in reaching their tenure and promotion goals despite the obstacles they faced. As Robin (a Jones et al. study participant) exclaimed, “I’d die before I fail” (Jones et al., 2015, p. 144). Other participants also stressed that excellence was the goal in all they undertook, “Always strive for excellence no matter what” stated Linda (Jones et al., 2015, p. 144). The

sentiments expressed by the participants of the Jones study mimicked the interview participants of this study.

Two questions asked of interview participants in this study concerning persistence and breaking the Black ceiling are presented here with the interview participants' responses.

Question 1 asked, "Did you have any doubts that you would persist in the professorate? Did it ever get to the point you thought, "I can't do this," or no?" Question 2 inquired, "Okay, so there's a concept called the Black ceiling, which is an under-representation of African American females in senior leadership or senior management, but in this case, the professorate. There is still an under-representation of African American females in the professorate, particularly in CES, but you seem to have broken that ceiling. To what do you attribute that? In other words, how to do it?"

Pam stated, "I am persistent to a fault." Her concern with the concept of the Black ceiling was somewhat discrepant in that she believed that because African American female CES professors have been minoritized, they are subsequently underserved, but when that dynamic shifts, so will the barrier called the Black ceiling. She added, "That's at least more appropriate because we're not minorities; we're minoritized, but I would use "underserved." Pam's belief aligned with the current literature concerning marginalized and minoritized peoples. Colleges and universities, along with other social institutions, according to Harper (2012), define minoritized individuals as minorities in United States because underrepresentation and subordination are socially constructed and accepted.

Brenda attributed her persistence in the academy to her community of encouragers. She stated, "I think it was tapping into my circle that got me through." In addition to her persistence she attributed the breaking of the Black ceiling in her life to a development of increased self-

efficacy. The trait known as self-efficacy is both critical and necessary for persistence (Beckwith et al., 2016). She stated, “I had to be more confident in myself... in order to excel. Because if you aren’t confident about yourself, then I feel like it’s a little bit more difficult for you to jump over some of those barriers.”

Debra’s beliefs about persistence and the Black ceiling were slightly discrepant as well. She did persist in the academy and she did believe in the concept of a Black ceiling, but her thoughts about breaking it were unique. She stated,

I don’t think that I have broken it. I think I never reached for it; I went around it. That was never of interest to me. One thing that is quite innate in me that I have known all along is that I don’t play by the rules. I never have. ...Rules are for people who benefit by them. And rules have never benefited me.

Victoria’s response when questioned whether she had had doubts about her persistence in the academy was brief and concise. She simply stated, “No, I never doubted.” However, her response to breaking the Black ceiling was quite detailed.

First of all, I have to do excellent work and my work has to be above board.... I did above and beyond what was expected.... I was creative and paired some of the work that I was doing with the assignments that would be done.... In doing that, it would bring my attention to that professor that, one, I was doing creative work and, two, I was doing above and beyond what everybody else was doing.... [In my] relationships with my professors in which if they would ask for something to be done, I was the person, not all the time, but I was the person that would do the tasks that they would ask and I would perform it well to whatever their standards were. ...I guess as I'm distilling it down, it's a quality of my work, and going above, and creating relationships.... That was a lot more

work for me individually, but I was investing, so I felt that it would pay off. Specifically having a mentor that I could trust and that would guide me and me learning how to say, "I need guidance." When he gave me referrals from organizations, I would take them, even if they were menial, silly jobs. I did the menial, silly jobs, and volunteer work, and along the way, I'm still building relationships and people are knowing me. So that's how I broke the ceiling.

Victoria trusted the process, but she additionally trusted herself, her work and her mentor. She was simultaneously willing to be led and orchestrating her own destiny.

Dee also stated that her ability to persist was related to multiple factors. She stated, "I had confidence in my competency and I'm not a wait and see kind of a person, my personality; I'm a go-getter." She acknowledged her personal trauma and stated, "I did the work [clinical counseling] ongoingly and I have a strong spiritual relationship I work on daily throughout the day. My spiritual practices I committed to help me have clarity in who I am with God and the world." Dee also expressed a spiritual empowerment in breaking the Black ceiling. When asked how she broke the Black ceiling, she reported,

Well, first of all, I think for me, God. Because I can do all things through Christ who centers me and without Him I'm nothing. And He basically has paved the way for me to have these opportunities. He gifted me and He's not going to give me without providing the opportunities.

Finally, Renee shared her belief concerning the origin of her persistence. When asked if she ever doubted, she empathically stated, "No." She attributed her persistence to knowing where she fit and not being drawn to places where she did not fit. Concerning her ability to break the Black ceiling, Renee reiterated that she attributed her ability to persist to knowing where she fit.

She stated, “So again, remember, I went back to it earlier, stepping outside of the box and not doing what is considered to be traditional or the norm. That’s how you’re able to break the ceiling.” The significance of this study is supported by the convergence of the experiences of the interview participants of this study and the themes explicated with the literature and supported by the conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

### **Significance of Research Findings**

This research study explored the lived experiences of six African American females in the CES professorate, with special focus on their underrepresentation in the CES professorate. Themes identified were, mentors facilitated persistence, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family support, external barriers (encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status), and persistence.

The significance of this research is that it effectively addressed the research question, “What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors’ experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?” and illuminated systemic challenges relating to the underrepresentation of African American females in the academy (Weinberg, 2008). Moreover, this study is significant because it pinpoints parallels between the experiences of the interview participants and the literature. These findings can be utilized to help others persist in the academy and in the CES professorate. This validation ensures the interview participants that not only are they seen and heard but believed. While internal barriers (hinderances self-imposed) did not arise as prominent challenges in this research, this research study identified the experiences the interview

participants had in common that contributed to their ability to persist in the academy, overcome external barriers, and subsequently confront the Black ceiling.

### **Implications**

This study explored the lived experiences of African American females in the CES professorate. The stories shared by the interview participants highlighted the connection between their personal experiences and the literature. The findings yielded themes (mentors facilitated persistence, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family support, external barriers [encountered racial discrimination, feelings of loneliness and invisibility, and realities of intersectionality and minority status], and persistence) concurrent to the literature and have implications for the academy as a whole as well as for CES.

The underrepresentation of African American females in the academy does not simply affect African American females in the academy. In a vastly diversifying nation, the presence of marginalized individuals in diverse organizations, including the academy, gives hope to onlookers. However, with regard to the academy, when institutions are made up of African American faculty, African American students are more likely to enroll and persist (Allen et al., 2000; Baggerly et al., 2017, Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). There is a positive relationship between diverse faculty retention and minoritized students' retention; as the former improves so does the latter (Hurtado et al., 2012). Unfortunately, it may also be that if the underrepresentation of African American faculty is not altered, minoritized students will be negatively affected theoretically enabling their underrepresentation as students.

As with many great battles (racial discrimination, sexual inequalities, financial disparity, etc.) it should not be the responsibility of the oppressed to be the sole champion of the cause

against discrimination. Concerning the underrepresentation of African American females in the academy overall and the CES professorate particularly the responsibility of achieving equality should be shared within academia. Attraction, recruitment, and retention of marginalized and minoritized talent should be an intentional effort within academia. Compartmentalizing these steps minimizes the end result of persistence. Persistence of African American females in CES is needed to challenge their underrepresentation and break the Black ceiling, and it begins with a wholistic perspective of attraction, recruitment, and retention.

One of many strengths African American females bring to the professorate is cultural diversity and a rich heritage centered around family, community, and others. Understanding cultural truths of minoritized populations (i.e. group vs. individual orientation) can be invaluable when interrelating with these diverse groups. Additionally, the presence and benefit of intentional mentors across disciplines, genders, and ages is equally historically and currently noted as being beneficial to both mentees and mentors. Mentees sharpen their skills and maximize their potential when partnered with mentors who share their knowledge and offer correction, counsel, support and guidance, producing a multiparty benefit. African American women who are positioned intersectionally by race and gender can significantly benefit from mentoring especially because of the challenges they face with racism, oppression, and discrimination.

External barriers often create hurdles, ceilings, and hinderances for the marginalized and minoritized. These barriers may be the result of social conditioning and include oppressions, racism, and discrimination (Beckwith et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2017; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Gamble & Turner, 2015). Understanding the challenges of African American females in the CES professorate surrounding the concepts of external barriers

and ceilings (Black ceilings) is imperative to challenge the underrepresentation of this population in the academy.

Finally, the idea of calling, gifts, and purpose are valued concepts in this study. Calling (a sense of direction); gifts (how individuals add value and contribute to society); and purpose (why one exists) are values often connected to self-efficacy and persistence (DeWitz et al., 2009). Understanding and leveraging these ideals can facilitate the diversification of the professorate.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

Limitations in any research study are normal in that no study is perfect (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The limitations of this study in no way hindered or compromised the results. The limitations for this study included sample size challenges due to difficulty in finding interview participants and limited qualitative research specific to this topic with this population. While these are limitations, because they offer a holistic view of the problem, they additionally serve as recommendations for action and further study.

#### **Limitations**

The purposeful sample for this study was made up of African American females in the CES professorate. While it was anticipated that the sample would be small, it was desired that a purposeful sample of eight or more could be obtained. The very nature of the underrepresentation of this population hindered a larger sample from being identified and utilized.

Having comparative literature for most research is imperative because it affords researchers the opportunity to compare and contrast their research with other research in the field. Due to the limited amount of peer reviewed journal articles on this specific topic with the purposeful population of this study this researcher was not afforded that opportunity.



## **Recommendations for Action**

Given the limitations from the previous section, recommendations for action were not difficult to determine. These actions are relatively easy to implement, as the only requirement is willingness on the part of policy makers and implementers. The recommendations for action discussed in this section include updating hiring practices, writing and publishing literature addressing this dynamic, and implementing trainings specific to this and other minoritized and marginalized populations.

The recommendations for immediate action include an intentional attempt to increase the number of African American females in the CES professorate. This is done by attracting, recruiting, and retaining this population through establishing diverse hiring boards of faculty, administrators, and stakeholders focused on hiring qualified minoritized and marginalized talent. A mandatory part of this initial phase is facilitating the continued persistence of this population in the CES professorate after the initial attraction, recruitment, and retention stages to truly challenge the underrepresentation created by a Black ceiling.

The existence of peer-reviewed literature concerning the lived experiences of African American females in the CES professorate is scarce. Therefore researchers, and members of the academy should take immediate action toward rectification by researching and publishing studies addressing this dynamic. Many academic institutions have a research agenda. Adding this research focus to an already established research agenda should require minimal effort.

Lastly, as the result of this study, I recommend the implementation of trainings highlighting racially biased and discriminatory practices within the academy. Actions taken by many are not seen by them as racially insensitive, but a training focused on intercultural integrity, intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity could directly challenge these

racially biased and discriminatory practices. Ensuring the intercultural competence of individuals in a culturally diverse world should be of primary importance.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

In addition to limitations and recommendations for action, recommendations for further study also arose as a direct result of this research study. The recommendations are the result of information I was surprised to see as well as information I expected to see but did not. The information I was surprised to see was interview participants' skepticism of the concept of the Black ceiling and the information I expected to see but did not, which was prominent in the literature, was interview participants' reports of stereotyping, tenure, and internalized racial oppression.

I was surprised to see the discrepant ideals concerning the Black ceiling. Two interview participants either challenged the existence of the Black ceiling or the value of it. One interview participant stated that instead of a Black ceiling, the fact that African American women have been minoritized and underserved is the challenge. She did not refute its existence, but more so its power. She reported that once African American females were no longer considered minorities, such discriminatory acts could be diminished. Another interview participant reported her disinterest in both the concept of the Black ceiling and the rules which hold it in place. Her report that she is a rule breaker and the fact that the Black ceiling is held in place by unfair rules that do not benefit her intrigued me. Her belief is that the Black ceiling is of little relevance. These two interview participants did not create doubt in me about the existence of the Black ceiling, but about the need to break it versus circumvent it. I value and honor their belief and experience concerning the Black ceiling. An area for further study could be the redefining of this

very idea, at least for African American females. Concerning the Black ceiling, is it necessary to submit to rules which will never be beneficial, or is a better option to create one's own rules?

The ideas of stereotyping and tenure were prominent in the literature. Reports of feeling stereotyped and either denied tenure or tenure being made extremely difficult was nearly absent from the interview participants' responses of this study. The intersectional positioning of the interview participants was as African American females and yet only one interview participant mentioned concerns with microaggressions. She highlighted concerns with her naturalized hair. While she did not report receiving comments concerning her hair, she mentioned her hair due to its cultural significance to her. Is it possible that stereotypical comments and behaviors have diminished from the racially insensitive, or is it that recipients of those comments no longer care how they are perceived and judged by others?

While a few of the interview participants reported they had obtained tenure, none of them discussed the concept with any sense of urgency. Two interview participants did not mention the concept of tenure at all, one mentioned she did not care about tenure, one interview participant left a tenured position to escape what she described as racism, challenge, and hardship, and two interview participants mentioned they had received tenure, but the concept was secondary in the conversation. I question if the concept of tenure is of minimal interest due to it being largely unattainable, unfair, and often out of reach, or is the concept itself becoming outdated.

Additionally, as the researcher of this study, while doing the literature review surrounding this subject, I was fascinated with the concepts of both internal and external barriers. The idea of internalized racial oppression (internal barrier) interested me because the underlying idea was that the oppressed sometimes held themselves captive with their own beliefs and/or lack of self-efficacy. When asked about internal barriers that hindered interview participants'

promotion, advancement, or breaking of the Black ceiling, the interview participants, by large, refuted any lasting effect. One interview participant acknowledged internal barriers of personal trauma (family tragedy, death and sickness), while another acknowledged an initial internal barrier of low self-efficacy very early in her academic career. Both interview participants reported recognizing the need to overcome such internal barriers quickly, and therefore, they were not hindered in their journeys as a result of them. I began to question if those Ph.D. recipients who entered the academy and persisted had differing levels of self-efficacy and internalized racial oppression than those who either did not enter the professorate and/or those who did not persist? Further study on any of these recommended topics could benefit the academy, CES, and/or society equally and maintain lasting effects.

### **Researcher Positionality/Bias**

As I addressed the validity and reliability aspects of this study in Chapter One of this work, I fully expected them to be sufficient to maintain the integrity of this work. Those validity and reliability measures utilized were member checks, triangulation, and trustworthiness. While I still maintain that they were effective, I did not initially appreciate the magnitude of my entanglement with this work. As an African American female doctoral student in CES and the primary researcher of this work, I am an integral part of the world being studied and I realized I was these women (Finlay & Evans, 2009). Therefore, I added an extra measure of validity and reliability by regularly journaling my experiences as I engaged this research to allow me the opportunity to be detached as a researcher and still fully engage in this study.

The journal entries allowed me to fully explore the sadness, anger, fear, disappointment, and hope I experienced during the interview process and the continued engagement with the interviews during the thematic analysis. I cried, smiled, and laughed out loud as I continually

reread the interviews, viewed the photovoice photos, and contemplated what my own photovoice photo would reveal.

As I consider the scope of this study, I, like these women, understand that there will always be resistance in the face of radical change, but I also want to leave a legacy and contribute something that will outlive me. My desire, through this study, is to advocate for mentors for myself and others. My desire is to help willing others understand what it means to live intersectionally in Black female skin. My desire is to honor these women by showing up differently (metaphorically larger) for others to have hope as the result of my presence. This study boosted my self-confidence, facilitated my self-efficacy, and showed me how to persist. I am forever grateful and changed.

### **Summary**

This chapter revisited the findings initially presented in Chapter Four of this study. The chapter began with an overview of the scope of the previous chapter, followed by the interpretation of findings (themes) as compared to current literature, and the significance of the research after the study was completed. The shared themes of mentorship, calling and gifts, and encouragers and positive family support were discovered among the interview participants. These commonalities suggest that these experiences contributed to the interview participants' persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers. The chapter concluded with implications of findings, limitations of the study, and finally recommendations for actions as well as for further study.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the lived experiences of six African American females in the CES professorate from universities across the United States. The background of the problem is the

historical and cultural challenges experienced by African Americans in America in general and African American women in particular. The statement of the problem encompassed the fact that many African American female counselor educators were challenged with external barriers comprising racism, oppression, discrimination, sexism, and stereotyping. These barriers, often called the Black ceiling, hindered African American females from persisting in the academy and the result was their underrepresentation. The study additionally highlighted parallels between the underrepresentation of African American females in the academy and the underrepresentation of other marginalized and minoritized populations. The purpose of this study was to investigate underrepresentation and other challenges.

The research question “What were, if any, African American female counselor education and supervision professors’ experiences that contributed to their persistence in the academy and overcoming of internal and external barriers?” was presented in addition to a conceptual and theoretical framework conceptualizing the study in a historical and cultural context. The significance of the study was its aim of illuminating factors facilitating this underrepresentation and the development of a Black ceiling.

The study additionally highlighted literature on this subject focusing on internal and external barriers. The qualitative, phenomenological research design with added aspects of photovoice, CRT, feminist theory and Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription and compromise was introduced in the methods chapter. The process of purposefully selecting participants for the study was explained, along with the data collection analysis process, and issues of validity and reliability and additional ethical considerations were highlighted. The findings (mentors facilitated persistence, belief in concepts of calling and gifts, encouragers and positive family support, external barriers and persistence) were then presented, affirming that similar

experiences did exist that contributed to the persistence of the interview participants in the academy. A discussion of the findings including their significance, implications, limitations, and recommendations then followed.

After conducting this study, I realize the experiences of these women can have an effect much like skimming stones on water – their lived experiences can be used to strengthen individual students (through mentorship), entire classrooms (through modeling), universities as a whole (through advocacy), and society (through sponsoring others). Their lived experiences need not be wasted. The invisible barrier (the Black ceiling) thought to hinder such persistence was apparently broken by these interview participants. I end my thoughts concerning the injustices experienced by African American women with a quote, “History, despite its wrenching pain cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage need not be lived again” (Angelou, 1993).

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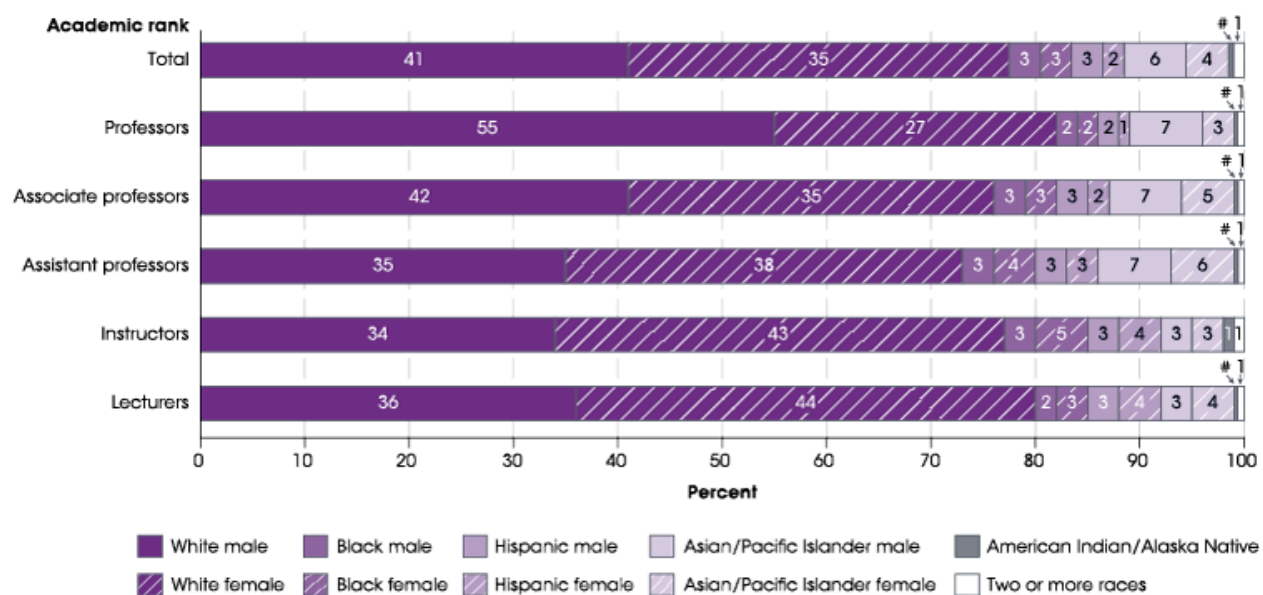
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## APPENDIX A: Faculty in Degree-Granting Institutions in 2016



Adapted from *The Condition of Education 2018* by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2018 (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018144.pdf>).

## APPENDIX B: Prevalence of Mental Illness

### *Past Year Prevalence of Any Mental Illness Among U.S. Adults (2016)*

Demographic	Percent
Sex	
Female	21.7
Male	14.5
Age	
18–25	22.1
26–49	21.1
50+	14.5
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic or Latino <sup>a</sup>	15.7
White	19.9
Black	14.5
Asian	12.1
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	16.7
American Indian/Alaska Native	22.8
2 or More	26.5
Total	18.3

<sup>a</sup>All other groups are non-Hispanic or Latino.

Adapted from *Mental Illness* by the National Institute of Mental Health, 2016 (<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml>).

### APPENDIX C: Mental Health Treatment Statistics

#### *Mental Health Treatment Received in Past Year Among U.S. Adults with Any Mental Illness*

(2016)

Demographic	Percent
Sex	
Female	48.8
Male	33.9
Age	
18–25	35.1
26–49	43.1
50+	46.8
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic or Latino <sup>a</sup>	31.0
White	48.7
Black	29.3
Asian	21.6
2 or More	37.1
Total	43.1

<sup>a</sup>All other groups are non-Hispanic or Latino.

Adapted from *Mental Illness* by the National Institute of Mental Health, 2016  
(<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml>).

### APPENDIX D: CACREP Full-Time Faculty Demographics

Race/Ethnicity	Gender		Alternative identity (%)	Total (%)
	Male (%)	Female (%)		
African American/Black	4.11	10.40	0.00	14.52
American Indian/National Alaskan	0.45	0.25	0.00	0.70
Asian American	1.15	2.88	0.00	4.03
Caucasian/White	28.33	43.01	0.04	71.38
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish American	1.85	2.84	0.08	4.77
National Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.04	0.04	0.00	0.08
Multiracial	0.50	1.07	0.04	1.60
Non-resident Alien	0.16	0.50	0.00	0.66
Other/un-disclosed	1.11	1.15	0.00	2.26

*Note.* Data not equal to 100%, rounded to the nearest hundredth, and were taken from a sample of 2,432 (95.79%) full-time faculty members currently working in CACREP-accredited programs; not all programs provided information on the 2016 Vital Statistics Survey. Adapted from *Annual Report 2016* by CACREP, 2017.



## APPENDIX E: Interview Questions

### Phenomenological Retrospective Semi-structured Interview Questions

*Script: Thank you for joining in this important research in exploring the underrepresentation of African American females in the CES professorate. This interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will be recorded as we discussed. As you know, I am positioned as an African American female in a CES PhD program desiring to enter the CES professorate. While I am sure I will have strong reactions to many of your responses, I will limit my comments so as to not influence you. Please feel free to ask me to repeat or clarify a question, and I will do the same with your answers if needed. May I start the recording?*

1. Please tell me about your family of origin's educational background and values starting with your parents, your maternal and paternal grandparents, your maternal and paternal aunts and uncles, and your maternal and paternal cousins.
2. Please tell me about your own personal academic journey. (Personal history/values: Who would you say were your primary encouragers or discouragers?)
3. How and why did you make the decision to pursue the professorate? (Personal motivation/values: Was someone in particular responsible for you choosing to enter the professorate? Was this an aha experience or "I knew all along" experience?)
4. Once you made the decision to pursue the professorate, what was your process? (Journey – finding employment).
5. There is concept called the "Black ceiling," (McGirt, 2017) which describes an underrepresentation of African American females in senior leadership and/or senior management positions, or in this case, the professorate. You seem to have broken that Black ceiling. To what do you attribute that? (Success factors)
6. What were the factors you had to overcome? (The story of how you came from there [past] to here [now]; internal and/or external barriers/internal.)
7. You mentioned \_\_\_\_\_ [barriers]. How did that manifest, and how did you deal with it? (Repeat for as many as were reported)
8. Did you have any doubts that you could or would persist in the professorate? If so, how did you challenge them? If not, why do you think you didn't have doubts about your persistence? (Internal barriers)
9. Did you have questions about the academic journey, policies, procedures, etc.? If yes, how were those questions answered? By whom? If not, to what do you attribute not having those types of questions? (External barriers)

10. Who were the instrumental people who helped you along your journey to and through your entrance into the professorate? What were their race, age, gender, etc.? (Mentors).
11. You mentioned barriers earlier. What were the most difficult barriers you faced? Why were they the most difficult? [**Researcher note to self:** broad-to-general/internal, external, sociocultural, etc.].
12. Were there any academic family values or factors that helped or hindered your journey? (Reframing Question 1, particularly academic values).
13. What are some of your family attitudes about success?
14. Please tell me about your worldview (e.g., Christian, Atheist, Agnostic, etc.). Has that helped or hindered your academic process? If helped, how? If hindered, how? (Spiritual values)

These next few questions will be about your academic environment, but please do not use identifying data.

15. How would you describe the racial climate of your campus/university (students, peers, administrators)? (Racial culture/climate)
16. Are you aware of specific efforts to recruit or retain African American female professors at your campus/university? If so, what are they? If not, how does that affect you? (Recruitment/retention)
17. What is a typical day for you in your role as a professor at your campus/university? What are the best and worst parts of any given day? (Phenomenon)
18. As a minoritized individual, how do you perceive yourself in your role as an African American female professor, and how do you believe others perceive you as you “show up” intersectionally as gendered and raced? (Internal and perceived external perception of self)
19. As we close, what would you consider your biggest successes and challenges in your role as an African American female professor? (Success and challenges)
20. Thank you for your time. Is there anything you would like to add concerning this topic/interview? (Open)

*Closing script: Thank you, (NAME of PARTICIPANT), for your time. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate you for doing this interviewing and sharing your story. After the interview is transcribed, I will contact you for a “member check” and second interview as we discussed. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns that arise as a result of this interview. May I contact you for needed clarifications? Thank you again.*  
Stop recording.

## APPENDIX F: Dissertation Participant Request Letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Sharon V. Lewis, and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, in the Department of Counseling and Family Studies (School of Behavioral Sciences). I am conducting my dissertation research on the underrepresentation of African American females in the professorate in counseling education and supervision. This is a qualitative phenomenological study investigating the lived experiences of African American females in the CES professorate. I am recruiting participants who fit the criteria and who would be interested in participating in the study, and you have been identified by (referral source) as an African American female counselor educator and professor. I would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss this topic with you (several meeting options are available, and we can discuss those at your earliest convenience).

Should you have any questions concerning this study, or you believe you fit the profile criteria and would be interested in participating in this study, please send an email with your contact information to [REDACTED] (or alternate email, [REDACTED]). If you have further questions, I will respond to you directly to discuss the study in more detail. My overall goal is to explore, understand, and value the lived experiences of African American females in the CES professorate. If you are interested in being a participant in the research, a consent form will be sent to you immediately.

This study has a photovoice element, which is a qualitative tool to further deepen the understanding of phenomenon through the use of photographs. Additional information will be provided upon agreement to participate in this study.

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Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
 Sharon V. Lewis, M.A., LPC  
 Counseling Doctoral Candidate  
 Department of Counseling and Family Studies  
 School of Behavioral Sciences  
 Liberty University  
 Lynchburg, VA 24515  
 [REDACTED]

## **APPENDIX G: Informed Consent Form**

### *The Black Ceiling: The Underrepresentation of African American Females in the CES Professorate*

Liberty University Counselor Education and Supervision Program

School of Behavioral Sciences

You are invited to participate in a research study about African Americans females in the CES professorate. This project (dissertation) will serve as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Education and Supervision. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an African American female who is employed as a professor, which is the purposeful sample for this dissertation.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. By signing this form, participants consent to taking part in the study.

My name is Sharon V. Lewis. I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision Program in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, and I am conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this qualitative study, which will utilize two interviews and photovoice, is to investigate the lived experiences of African American female professors in counseling education and supervision.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following: Read and sign this consent form, participate in two semi-structured interviews approximately 45–60 minutes in length (one initial, one member check, which provides an opportunity for participants to review the interview transcription and provide photos), and respond to a prompt using photography (two to three photographs) and transmit said photos electronically to the primary researcher. The photographs must be original to the prompt, taken by you, and may not appear on any social media sites. The photos must not show any identifying features of a person or place. No photos with identifiable data (names, faces, etc.) will be accepted for this study. Photovoice is a participatory action tool, but in this case, it serves as the participants visual representation of a given concept. The photos will be taken by the participant (using a disposable camera provided by the primary researcher, if needed) or the individuals' personal camera such as a smart phone. The photographs remain the shared property of the participant and the primary researcher and may appear in the primary researcher's published dissertation and dissertation defense. A sample of a photovoice picture responding to a prompt can be provided to participants upon request but may not be used as participants' photovoice selection.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Benefits to society include providing data that might be used by administrators and professors at institutions of higher education to improve attraction and retention of African

American female professors and potentially minority professors. By supporting the intellectual advancement of a minority group, this study indirectly promotes acts of social justice. Otherwise, there are no perceived benefits from participating in this study.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study and are anticipated to incur no costs. Any costs associated with the photovoice portion of the study will be absolved by the primary researcher within reason given the nature of the study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely on a password protected device, and only my chair and I will have access to the records. Your responses to the interviews will be anonymous. To ensure anonymity of your responses to this research study, pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary. Once you begin, you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time prior to the completed dissertation being submitted for publication, after information is out of the primary researcher's control.

**How to Withdraw:** Withdrawal will not be derogatorily judged, affect your current or future relationship with this researcher, or affect your current or future relationship with Liberty University in any way. Please contact me (Sharon V. Lewis) if you desire to withdraw from this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** Again, my name is Sharon V. Lewis. If you have questions at any time about this study or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, please contact me, the principal investigator, at my email addresses ( [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] ). You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Lisa Sosin, at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu). Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. By signing this informed consent form and returning it to Sharon V. Lewis, I consent to participate in the study. (NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

**\*Demographic Information (Optional):**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sexual orientation: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity/Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Faith/Spirituality: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX H: Photovoice Prompt with Instructions**

Within the enactment of this methodology, research participants are invited to document aspects of their lives through photography and then provide written or oral accounts of the images they create (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017, p. i). Photographs must be taken specifically for this prompt, and previous photos cannot be used to address prompt.

### **Prompt:**

Take two to three pictures depicting what it feels like to be you as an African American female in the counseling education professorate.

## **APPENDIX I: Analysis of Phenomenological Data**

Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis of phenomenological data

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 122).

1. Using a phenomenological approach, obtain a full description of your own experience of the phenomenon.
2. From the verbatim transcript of your experience, complete the following steps:
  - a. Consider each statement with respect to significance as a description of the experience.
  - b. Record all relevant statements.
  - c. List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.
  - d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
  - e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience. Include verbatim examples.
  - f. Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures of your experience.
  - g. Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of your experience.
3. From the verbatim transcript of the experience of each of the other coresearchers, complete the above steps, a through g.
4. From the individual textural-structural descriptions of all coresearchers' experiences, construct a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole.

**APPENDIX J: Photovoice Pictures****Figure 3**

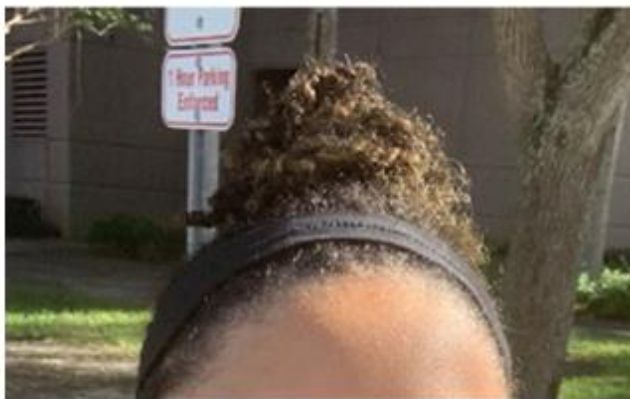
*Dee's Photovoice Photo and Caption*



Note: "Castaway in a grungy basement and not wanting to be here. Times when treated like I am not the amazing super bright person I am thanks to God and treated like I am banished to a grungy basement."

**Figure 4**

*Brenda's Photovoice Photo and Caption*



Note: "I transitioned my hair about six years ago and that was a big job for me because thinking of some of the messages we received about having natural hair as a black woman."



## Figure 5

### *Brenda's Second Photovoice Photo and Caption*



Note: "The shirt that I'm wearing when I travel now. I wear shirts that represent black pride, represent me, one of the reasons the shirt specifically says melanin."

## Figure 6

### *Victoria's Photovoice Photo and Caption*



**Note:** "Title: A Planting of the Lord to Display His Splendor

...**a planting of the LORD** for the **display of his splendor**. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations... (Isaiah 61:3-4)

**Figure 7**

*Dee's Second Photovoice Photo and Caption*



Note: "This quilt represents black beauty and reaching out (hands) to bring other black children and adults higher."

**Figure 8**

*Pam's Photovoice Photo and Caption*



Note: "Roots & Wings in a Beige Box"

**Figure 9***Dee's Third Photovoice Photo and Caption*

Note: "Stairs, helping counselor trainees climb to the top as they see me as a model counselor educator they can grow (climb up, grow)."