FACULTY-STUDENT MENTORING-RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCES OF

AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK CES DOCTORAL STUDENTS

by

Steven Odipo Siaji

Liberty University

A Dissertation Prospectus in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2020

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological qualitative inquiry explored the lived experiences of African American/Black (AA/Black) doctoral counselor education and supervision students in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships. The literature review provides a theoretical framework based on Miller's (1976) theory of relational-cultural theory. Data were collected through a demographic survey and in-depth telephone interviews. Data analysis included identifying participants' significant themes, utilizing themes to create structural and textural descriptions, and ultimately describing the essence of participants' experiences. The five themes that emerged, related to participants' lived experiences, were these: belonging within the African American/Black community, coping, racism, and multiculturalism. The study results suggest that there was a dearth of faculty-student mentoring relationships, and some participants reported poor relationships with some White faculty and peers, negative student experiences, lack of confidence, and negative team interactions.

Keywords: mentoring, relationship, faculty-student, African American/Black

Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this achievement to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who saved me by His grace and called me to serve Him and His people. It is because of Your presence and the indwelling of Your Holy Spirit that I have had the faith to accomplish this task, the strength to endure, the wisdom to rest when exhausted, and the wisdom to start the journey again. I will forever be thankful to Thee my God for this gift you have entrusted me with on this earth. I promise not to squander this gift.

I would like to acknowledge, first, Ms. Isela Martinez—the Bible School professor who first called me "Dr. Siaji." You planted a seed in me that has finally borne fruit. Second, I thank my children, Linda, Brian David, Nathan, and Joseph, and my grandson Ezra, for giving me inspiration to work harder and set a positive example for all of you. I will always love you all.

Third, I appreciate all these special people who have always motivated me to be better: my mother (Bibiana Nyaoro), Paul (my brother), and Anne and Rose (my sisters). Fourth, I acknowledge Carolyn and Keely, who have always stimulated me intellectually; Nereyda, my clinical director, who always gave me time off to go to school; Dick, the young man who takes care of my mother; and Kathy Shaibani, my editor. Kathy, I am forever grateful for the countless hours you spent reading and editing chapters as well as offering helpful advice. All these people have made my life less stressful.

Finally, I would also like to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Pride, and my committee members, Dr. Mwendwa and Dr. Myers. The dedication and commitment of these people will never be forgotten.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In this study, I utilized a qualitative inquiry to explore the lived experiences of African American/Black (AA/Black) doctoral students in faculty-student mentoring relationships. The findings from this exploration of mentoring experiences, specifically in counselor education and supervision (CES), will add to the body of knowledge about this topic and expand our understanding of minorities in mentoring relationships. Earlier research studies conducted with AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs were relatively limited, so this study was designed to focus specifically on the faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black doctoral students in this academic specialty. The purpose of this study was to extend the understanding of such mentoring relationships from the perspective of AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs.

Worldwide, interest in the role of mentoring relationships has increased significantly. Organizations have focused particularly on leadership development (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2018; Smith, 2017; Tabloski, 2016), as well as on diversity and inclusion (Benschop, Holgersson, Van den Brink, & Wahl, 2015; McCann, Sparks, & Kohntopp, 2017). According to Frich, Brewster, Cherlin, and Bradley (2015), the term *leadership development* often encompasses organizational efforts to develop both individual leaders and a pipeline for leadership within an organization. Barak (2015) suggested that *diversity* and *inclusion* are often used interchangeably, even though they are two separate constructs. According to McCann et al. (2017), *organizational diversity* refers to the differences among an organization's members (race, gender, age, ethnicity, and other demographic categories), whereas *inclusion* refers to an individual's sense of being a part of organizational systems, both formal and informal.

According to Jakubik, Eliades, and Weese (2016), mentoring is not a new concept: It dates back to Homer's *Odyssey*, when Odysseus trusted his servant Mentor to care for his son Telemachus while he was away at war. Thomas and Thomas (2015) explained that the term *mentor* refers to a wise and trusted counselor or teacher. Most recent literature has described the mentor as a senior, more-experienced individual who teaches, guides, supports, and protects the mentee, a younger, less-experienced individual (Hernandez, Estrada, Woodcock, & Schultz, 2017), in a developmental relationship (Yip & Kram, 2016). Snoeren, Raaijmakers, Niessen, and Abma (2016) describe mentorships as dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which the mentor serves as a guide to the mentee in learning the ropes of organizational life (Scully, Blake-Beard, Felicio, & O'Neill, 2017).

Robinson and Reio (2012) suggested that the inclusion of minorities in future mentoring research could provide a new window for understanding. This study is designed to explore the faculty-student mentoring relationships of AA/Black doctoral students in CES. This study is significant for both the academic community and organizational business settings because its goal is to extend the understanding and implementation of cross-ethnic mentoring relationships. The findings of this study will be essential for future mentoring relationships, educating mentors and mentees alike on the ideal characteristics associated with successful mentoring outcomes.

Mentoring has been highlighted in the literature as one strategy that fosters and facilitates academic progress as well as career advancement. Mentoring has proved to be an effective strategy in improving retention of college students and faculty in fields with a history of minority underrepresentation (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005). Other studies have suggested that there is no clear agreement about what makes mentoring successful. Nevertheless, there is

widespread agreement that mentoring does work and that more of it is needed (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Hall & Sandler, 1983; Haring, 1997; Healy, 1997; Wunsch, 1994; Zachary, 2000).

Thomas, Willis, and Davis (2007) recommended several strategies for AA/Black graduate students to help them become active participants in their education. Just as faculty members need strategies to become effective mentors, students need strategies in order to receive effective mentoring throughout their graduate training. Thomas et al. (2007) recommended a few strategies that minority graduate students can employ in their graduate education. The first is to be proactive in getting the mentoring they desire, need, and deserve. For example, Robinson (1999) developed an institutional mentoring program for minority graduate students in order to proactively obtain support both for herself and others. Second, minority graduate students should research the departments to which they wish to apply by seeking out other minority students there—not only within the program, but within other similar departments at the university. It may be that in other departments minority graduate students receive their greatest support. Third, Thomas et al. asserted that minority graduate students must be open to having a mentor of a different ethnic background or gender; they should be receptive to the idea that someone from a different background is willing to provide the training they need to achieve their career goals.

Humlum, Kleinjans, and Nielsen (2012) postulated that one of the reasons why women and racial minorities are underrepresented in certain occupations is that these jobs lack same-gender or same-race mentors to help prospective employees in their careers. Kofoed and McGovney (2019) reported that, for the classroom setting, there is a robust literature demonstrating that having a teacher of the same gender or race can benefit students and influence their decision making on a variety of short- and medium-term outcomes. For example, Carrell, Page, and West (2010) randomized the cadets at the United States Air Force Academy to

professors and found that female students were more likely to major in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields if taught by a female professor. Lavy and Sand (2015) used random assignment of middle-school students in Tel Aviv, Israel, to teachers and found that if teachers discriminated against female students, the students were less likely to take advanced STEM courses and select STEM occupations. Other studies used quasiexperimental methods to show that role models can be influential in the classroom, affecting a variety of outcomes (including grades; Fairlie, Hoffmann, & Oreopoulos, 2014; Griffith, 2014; Lim & Meer, 2017) and preventing student misbehavior (Dee, 2005).

The national initiatives that have been designed to recognize the value of mentoring in the United States and foster its development include Department of Education Mentoring Program grants (http://www.ed.gov./offices/OSDFS/mg.html); the U.S. Postal Service commemorative stamp, "Mentor a Child" (http://www.usps.com/news/2001/philatelic/ sr02_003.htm); the White House's Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM), which recognize individual mentors and mentoring programs (http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/hrd/paesmem.asp); and the designation of January as National Mentoring Month by the National Mentoring Partnership (http://www. hsph.harvard.edu/ chc/mentoring.html). The partnership hopes to scale mentoring programs to meet the needs of the nation's youth. The establishment of all these initiatives clearly indicates that mentoring is a national priority (Girves et al., 2005).

The purpose of this study was to explore the faculty-student mentoring experiences of AA/Black doctoral students in a CACREP-accredited CES program. The research explored the experiences of one student who had dropped out and seven who were currently enrolled. Research has suggested that mentoring relationships provide critical personal and professional

development opportunities throughout an individual's career. These relationships are especially important for racial minorities, because in academic and professional environments in which they are underrepresented, minority students may lack access to the informal networks and sources of information that are required for success. The lack of mentors for minority graduate students is important, given its potential impact for their retention and subsequent success and also for the future diversity of CES programs—especially in the areas of teaching and research (Thomas et al., 2007).

Wright-Harp and Cole (2008) stressed the lack of progress since the seminal work of Taylor (1993) on mentoring. It had been more than a decade since Taylor addressed the topic in his chapter "Mentoring People of Color: Challenges and Opportunities," in which he discussed mentoring as a means to increase the success of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. He also provided recommendations for addressing the problem, yet there still exists a major disparity in the number of African Americans/Blacks who enter careers in academia and research in the field of human communication sciences. Even more alarming, according to Wright-Harp and Cole (2008), is the continued decline in the number of males entering graduate school compared to females; the disparity has reached critical proportions, particularly among African Americans.

Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) suggested that mentoring relationships, formal or informal, create conditions for success in graduate school. For example, mentoring relationships serve to (a) integrate a student into the fabric of the department, (b) cultivate essential professional and social networks, (c) aid students in acquiring core research competencies, and (d) pave the way for placement in the workforce upon matriculation from graduate school (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001). Thomas et al. (2007) postulated that minority graduate

students often experience more isolation and less access to mentors and role models than their nonminority peers. Even when mentoring relationships do emerge, they may not be on a par with the mentoring provided to nonminority graduate students.

Henfield, Owens, and Witherspoon (2011) found that, indeed, unlike White students enrolled in doctoral programs, African American students attending doctoral programs at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) encounter the added pressure of being a minority within these largely White learning environments. According to Nicholas and Tanksley (2004) and Shealey (2009), these African American students identified feelings of intense isolation, marginalization, and oppression. King and Chepyator-Thompson (1996) surveyed 106 African Americans who had received their doctoral degrees in exercise science from a PWI, and 46% of these respondents recalled their doctoral education as being a positive experience because of positive relationships established with peers and faculty and a comfortable racial climate on campus. Yet 31% described the experience as partially negative, and 18% described their experience as totally negative. The 49% of students who had negative experiences attributed these feelings to a negative racial climate on campus, a dearth of African American peers and faculty, and discrimination. These results were echoed almost a decade later in a qualitative study of six graduates of doctoral programs at PWIs. Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, and Smith (2004) reported that the "most powerful" (p. 234) theme they reported related to feelings of isolation from other African Americans. According to participants, these feelings were so strong that some described it as feeling "invisible" (p. 234) and considered dropping out of school. In spite of more than 40 years of activism, social policy, and social justice, almost half of the African American students surveyed about their graduate education still reported negative campus climates with regard to race, marginalization, feelings of isolation, and the lack of a substantial

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racial peer group. Even less is known about the experiences of African American doctoral students in counselor-education programs (Henfield, Owens, & Witherspoon, 2011).

The Mentoring Process

Mentoring is defined as a process whereby a person guides, leads, supports, teaches, and challenges other individuals in order to facilitate their personal, educational, and professional growth and development through mutual respect and trust (Wright-Harp & Cole, 2008). An understanding of cultural and gender differences is critical for mentoring success. Mentoring is viewed not only as a relationship between two individuals but as a growth process, and as such it can be systematically planned and evaluated.

The following factors must be considered in the mentoring process: (a) the identification and training of mentors, (b) the pairing of mentors and protégés, (c) the selection of mentoring activities, (d) the devotion of time to mentoring, and (e) the life cycle of the process (Wunsch, 1994). Mentoring goes beyond coaching and advising; it is the means and the process used to support the protégé's orientation and professional development. It includes developing the relationship between the mentor and mentee to ensure emotional safety; it also provides the cultural norms needed for risk taking, for the sake of learning in general and achieving accelerated professional growth.

Attributes of the Ideal Mentor

A mentor is described as someone who makes a concerted effort to assist another individual to become a successful professional (National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, & Institute of Medicine, 1997). Toward this end, the ideal mentor must possess a multitude of traits and skills, in addition to a willingness to commit to a mentoring

relationship. The mentor must be accessible, open-minded, supportive, a good listener, and willing to be sensitive to the protégé's needs and areas of interest. Moreover, the mentor-protégé relationship should be characterized by mutual respect, trust, understanding, and empathy (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997).

Based on the aforementioned traits, the ideal mentor assumes multiple roles. Zelditch (1990, p. 1) stated,

> Mentors are advisers, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; tutors, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; masters, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about and aid in obtaining opportunities; models, of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic.

According to the National Academy of Sciences et al. (1997), for the mentoring relationship to be successful, the mentor must be sensitive to cultural diversity, which involves being willing to understand the culture of persons from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The mentor must also be willing to understand factors that may be attributable to gender differences and societal customs (e.g., the demands of being a wife and mother, or a single parent)—factors that could influence the protégé's academic success.

It is suggested that the mentor's personal style be compatible with that of the protégé. For example, a mentor who is a goal-driven, organized, flexible, and systematic person with effective communication skills would work well with a protégé who has similar characteristics. Likewise, the protégé must also have a clear understanding of his or her own management style and should

seek a mentor who has a compatible management-style preference (e.g., authoritarian, participatory, or laissez-faire; Wright-Harp & Cole, 2008). The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, or MBTI (The Myers and Briggs Foundation, 2008), is an excellent instrument that can be used by mentors and protégés to obtain a better understanding not only of their personality type, but also of their management and leadership style (and preferences). Most importantly, the ideal mentor should possess excellent motivational skills and must believe that mentoring relationships should be mutually satisfying and rewarding.

Benefits of Mentoring

Research studies have suggested that mentoring relationships, formal or informal, create conditions for success in graduate school. The benefits of mentoring relationships have been argued from the perspective of the protégé, mentor, and organization. Kram (1983) suggested that the benefits of mentoring apply to both the protégé and the mentor, as well as to organizations fostering mentoring relationships. Gunn, Lee, and Steed (2017) postulated that the protégé will benefit from receiving psychological and emotional support, goal setting, role modeling, and career guidance. Khosla (2013) asserted that the protégé's professional networks will expand, creating smoother transitions into new roles. These benefits can take place if the mentor provides public sponsorship of the protégé along with challenging work assignments. Such projects allow senior leaders to see the protégé successfully performing assigned tasks.

Khosla (2013) asserted that the mentor's benefits from a mentoring relationship are many—enhanced coaching and counseling skills, development of leadership skills, knowledge transfer, and a greater understanding of lower-level organizational barriers. Additional benefits of mentoring are increased scope of power, influence, and control (Opengart & Bierema, 2015) and the satisfaction of helping protégés to achieve their goals (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins,

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2006). Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy, and Kram (2012) added that mentors will better comprehend their protégés and will increase their power and influence with them. Opengart and Bierema (2015) asserted that both the mentor and the protégé will develop increased emotional and social skills as a result of the mentorship.

Kram (1983) noted that the organization benefits through mentoring as well, from higher organizational commitment and cooperative work. Burgess and Dyer (2009) suggested that as mentoring relationships are enhanced, the mentor and protégé grow in knowledge and skills, and the organization benefits considerably. Other benefits to the organization from formal mentoring include increased morale, organizational commitment, and productivity (Khosla, 2013), along with increased information sharing (Bryant & Terborg, 2008) and improved adaptation and acceptance of organizational changes (Hayes, 2005). Jakubik, Eliades, and Weese (2016) suggested that the benefits of mentoring to protégés include a sense of belonging, career optimism, competence, professional-development protection, and leadership readiness.

Several studies have examined the significance of mentoring (Allen, Eby, Chao, & Bauer, 2017; Arora & Rangnekar, 2014; Robinson & Reio, 2012), but few have focused on the experiences of African American doctoral students in CES programs. Recently, organizations started utilizing mentoring to attract, develop, and retain a diverse group of talent (Minor, Chowdhury, & Flowers, 2017). Wood and El Mansour (2010) reported that little research has been conducted regarding mentoring experiences among ethnic minorities, and others agree: Robinson and Reio (2012) wrote that organizational research has been limited and tends to focus on the majority culture, generalizing the findings to minority groups. Ragins and Kram (2007) reported that the root of the problem is access—minorities experience less access to mentors than do Whites. Wilson (2014) supported this argument, suggesting that organizations tend to hire

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few minority leaders, which in turn limits access to minority mentors for minorities in the early stages of their careers.

Organization of the Dissertation Proposal

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the present research—exploring the purpose and significance of this study, defining terms, and introducing primary research questions. Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature that is relevant to this study and reports on pertinent previous research efforts and findings. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of this study, including its design, participants, instruments, procedures, data analysis, and hypotheses. Chapter 4 presents the results of this study, including data collection, data analysis, findings for research questions 1 through 7, and evidence of quality. Chapter 5 provides discussions, conclusions, and recommendations, including an overview, an interpretation of the findings, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further study, and the researcher's reflections.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify themes from faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences involving AA/Black doctoral students in a CACREP-accredited CES doctoral program. The study has identified themes from seven students who are currently enrolled and one who dropped out.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are intended to benefit the faculty-student mentoring experiences of AA/Black doctoral students. Through mentoring, faculty members can play an important role in the development of future AA/Black leaders. The greater demand for

organizational diversity in leadership roles, specifically African Americans and Blacks, drives

the need for more effective relational-cultural mentoring approaches. The recommendations

provided in this study may increase successful outcomes of mentoring relationships. In addition,

CES doctoral programs may glean valuable insights from study participants—ideas on what to

emphasize in mentoring and how to increase the likelihood of success for the mentee. For the

organizations looking to develop or improve diversity throughout their leadership ranks, this

study will help uncover critical areas in the faculty-student mentoring process that previous

researchers had not explored.

Lewis et al. (2004), in a qualitative study, reported that eight currently enrolled and

recently graduated African American students in education-related doctoral programs

experienced numerous bouts of social isolation, often described as "invisibility." The concept of

social isolation or invisibility has also been found in other qualitative studies related to AA/Black

students at PWIs (Ellis, 2001; Gasman, Hirschfeld, & Vultaggio, 2008). Qualitative studies have

demonstrated that AA/Black students report a lack of involvement in mentoring relationships

with faculty and meaningful relations with peers (Shealey, 2009), which could explain in part the

feelings of social isolation. A previous qualitative study explored African American students'

perceptions of challenges they experienced as doctoral students in counselor-education

programs. The study explored structures and practices that contributed to the challenges. The

major themes that emanated from the findings were, to some extent, consistent with other

findings associated with African American students' experiences. The themes from this study

were (a) feelings of isolation, (b) feelings of peer disconnection, and (c) a sense that some faculty

members demonstrated a lack of respect for student differences. This lack of respect manifested

itself in the form of poor mentoring relationships, faculty expectations regarding student

relationships (i.e., that all students would get along well with one another), and perceived marginalization on the basis of style and dress. One who participated in the study admitted to behaving differently around faculty in the CES program; this is a deeply ingrained practice among oppressed groups (Henfield, Woo, and Washington (2013).

Henfield et al. (2013) suggested that African Americans have frequently behaved like members of the majority culture to appear to be less of a threat and to gain approval. After a long while, conformity becomes the expectation for oppressed groups; African Americans/Blacks have frequently met this expectation. The disconnect from faculty that the African American doctoral students expressed in this study is consistent with findings from other studies (Patton, 2009; Shealey, 2009). These findings are disconcerting, because constructive and fruitful relationships with faculty help to facilitate students' acquisition of skills and the fulfillment of future professional aspirations (Henfield et al., 2013).

Although there are studies that have focused exclusively on the challenges that confront AA/Black doctoral students enrolled in counselor-education programs, there is no research, unfortunately, that has identified and explored themes obtained through interviews about faculty-student mentoring relationships. In my study, I plan to develop the ideas that emerge from the reports given by students about their mentoring experiences in CACREP-accredited CES programs.

<center>**Definitions of Terms**</center>

African American

Agyemang, Bhopal, and Bruijnzeels (2005) defined the term *African American* as a person of African ancestral origins who self-identifies as African American or is so identified by others. The term has been in use at least since the 1920s, and it has been the preferred term in the

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United States since the 1970s. Most African Americans in the United States trace their origins to sub-Saharan Africa, and the term is not applied to Americans with roots in the countries of North Africa, such as Morocco. The majority of African Americans are descendants of people who were brought against their will to the Americas as slaves between the 17th and 19th centuries (i.e., distant ancestry). Such people differ in culture, language, migration history, and health from African Americans who came from Africa or the Caribbean in the 20th and 21st centuries (i.e., recent ancestry). These differences are often ignored.

Black

The term Black generally refers to a person with African ancestral origins. In some circumstances, usually in politics or in power struggles, the term is used more broadly to signify all non-White minority populations. The term has had long service in social, political, and everyday life. The use of the term to denote African ancestry is entrenched in epidemiological and public-health language, and it has a psychosocial and political significance in these fields. However, its broad usage is usually unhelpful. The term Black covers a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and is potentially offensive and unreliable. It conceals a remarkable heterogeneity of cultures among diverse African populations and reinforces racial stereotypes. In practice, Black refers to persons with ancestral origins in sub-Saharan Africa and with a brown or black complexion (Agyemang et al., 2005). The doctoral students who identify themselves as Blacks instead of African Americans will be included in the study sample.

Warner (2012) defined Black or African American people as those with origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Black racial category includes people who marked the "Black, African Am., or Negro" checkbox. It also includes respondents who described themselves as African American; sub-Saharan African, such

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as Kenyan and Nigerian; and Afro-Caribbean, such as Haitian and Jamaican. Throughout this dissertation, the terms Black and African American will be used interchangeably.

CACREP-accredited CES Doctoral Degree

This is a degree awarded for extensive coursework and research. It culminates with the completion of research on an original topic that will add to the body of knowledge in the field of counselor education and supervision (CES).

Doctoral Student

This refers simply to a student enrolled in a doctoral-degree program.

Faculty Advisor

The *advisor* is a faculty member who is assigned to a doctoral student to assist with course selection and who may ultimately become chair of the student's dissertation committee.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a relationship or partnership in which a veteran or expert fosters the academic, cultural, personal, or professional growth of a novice by sharing knowledge, skills, information, support, and encouragement (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Hernandez et al. (2017) defined *mentorship* as a developmental relationship between a more-experienced individual (mentor) and a less-experienced individual (protégé).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

The Higher Education Act of 1965 defined historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as institutions of higher learning established prior to 1964 the principal mission of which was then, and still is, the higher education of Black Americans. HBCUs have played an important role in narrowing the education and earnings gaps by providing the opportunity for a

college education to a significant number of African Americans, especially during the period of segregation (Wilson, 2007).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

A PWI is a college or university with a majority Caucasian (European origin) student population.

Protégé

A less-experienced individual is known as a protégé, or (in the context of mentoring), a mentee.

<div align="center">Research Question</div>

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore and identify faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs. The following research question was addressed: What are the lived experiences of African American/Black doctoral CES students in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships? The study was reinforced by seven subquestions, which were used to guide the interviews. The questions for the interview guide were designed to get to the point of the inquiry while leaving room for questions that emerged from participant responses (Hatch, 2002). Hatch (2002) suggested that the researcher drive the initial direction of the planned questions but allow participant responses to direct the subsequent path.

Subquestions

1. What does faculty-student mentorship mean to you?

2. What does a mentoring relationship look like in academia?

3. What role does a faculty member or a student play in establishing a mentoring relationship?

4. What might a mentoring relationship look like at a distance, through technology?

5. What are some of the challenges that you have experienced in trying to establish faculty-student mentoring relationships?

6. What are the outcomes when these relationships are not available?

7. How will the knowledge gained from this study help the faculty, the students, and the CES departments?

The interview-guide questions included descriptive questions designed to elicit insights from the participants on their faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences (Hatch, 2002). Rubin and Rubin (2005) asserted that terse or shallow answers from the participant may be an indication that the questions were not effective in achieving the intended depth of inquiry. Rubin and Rubin argued, "The goal of responsive interviewing is a solid, deep understanding of what is being studied" (p. 35); the interview guide will give the researcher the opportunity to ask for more information when participants provide responses that are too general. This approach provides more flexibility than traditionally fixed interview protocols: It allows a researcher to produce reflective and genuine results by allowing the interview questions to guide the process but not dictate a particular direction (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this inquiry, I examined the literature related to graduate school mentoring-relationship experiences with the specific goal of isolating a method and process that could succeed with AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs.

Historically, higher education has long been identified as one of the greatest hopes for intellectual and civic progress in the United States. For some people, though, it has been viewed as part of the problem rather than the solution (Boyer, 1997). Several scholars have acknowledged that higher education is a public good and that individual participation accrues benefits for the larger society (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998; Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005). In spite of these compelling arguments, recent studies have suggested that too few African Americans have access to the socioeconomic advantages associated with college-degree attainment (Harper, 2006). Somehow, this ongoing exclusion and the recurrent struggle for racial equity are really disturbing, given the number of policies that have been enacted to close college-opportunity gaps between African Americans and their White counterparts at various junctures throughout the history of higher education (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009).

Tyack and Cuban (1995), nevertheless, noted that education policy-making does not always lead to sustainable progress. Much evidence exists to suggest that this has been the case with policies created to increase access and ensure equity for AA/Black students in higher education. For example, in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation, including the operation of "separate but equal" facilities in public education, would no longer be legal. This ruling did not immediately give African Americans

victory over desegregation, as many Whites were not receptive to the court's ruling. Kelly and

Lewis (2000) postulated that if the Supreme Court had not followed up quickly in 1955, many

probably would have given up the quest for desegregation. The fact that the Supreme Court had

to reinforce the *Brown* decision a year later showed the seriousness of the anti-integration stance

taken by some Whites. And although primary and secondary schools were at the heart of this

case, the precedent clearly applied to public postsecondary institutions.

After the Supreme Court's 1955 ruling, one could conceivably hope that this policy

would immediately extend access to previously segregated educational institutions. Brown

(2001) argued, however, that the mandate to desegregate did not reach higher education until one

decade after *Brown*, when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Title VI of the Act stated that "no person in the United States, on the grounds of race, color, or

national origin, be excluded from participation in, or the benefits of, or be subjected to

discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (Malaney,

1987, p. 17). Title VI also restricted the distribution of federal funds to segregated schools.

Another educational policy that was intended to remove segregation and increase

inclusion of African Americans in colleges was *affirmative action*. President John F. Kennedy

first introduced the term in a civil rights speech given on the campus of Howard University, an

HBCU (Bowen & Bok, 1998). The idea of affirmative action was soon followed by elaborate

plans to remedy the problem of persistent exclusionary practices and decades of unfair treatment

of women and racial/ethnic minorities in all facets of American life: housing, business,

government, employment, and education.

As Harper et al. (2009) noted, in 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson officially brought

Kennedy's vision to fruition with the signing of Executive Order 11246, which required federal

contractors to increase the number of minority employees as an "affirmative step" toward remedying years of exclusion; affirmative action was systematically enacted that year. This policy, like the policies previously mentioned, positively affected African American participation in higher education. Under this new legislation, African Americans and Blacks were afforded opportunities to matriculate at institutions that were once completely inaccessible to non-Whites. Notwithstanding, their enrollments at major colleges and universities would not increase noticeably until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Kelly and Lewis (2000) reported that Black enrollments increased from 27% in 1972 to 34% in 1976 but dropped steadily during the subsequent decade. The policies that had previously ensured access and increased participation of African Americans in higher education took a downward turn in some states. Certain states, including Michigan, Oregon, and Arizona, have recently considered changes in their race-sensitive admissions policies that would further exclude racial and ethnic minorities (Allen, 2005).

Harper (2009) suggested that, despite the odds they have faced, the number of AA/Black degree holders has steadily increased, and more AA/Black students have participated in higher education. The civil rights movement emerged, court cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* occurred, and legislation was passed (e.g., Title VI) that required states to expand access to previously excluded people of color. Although these mandates allowed African American students to attend PWIs in larger numbers, the doors to these institutions were neither instantly nor easily opened, which confirmed that African Americans were not perceived as worthy of being educated.

Harper et al. (2009) asserted that race was used to suggest intellectual inferiority, promote AA/Black exclusion from White institutions, and ultimately keep them from disturbing

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the White status quo in higher education. Even when legislative mandates were passed and policies were enacted, the decisions were largely race based and geared toward promoting White interests, as opposed to eliminating inequities. Although race has been and continues to be central to the problems concerning African American college access and equity, its presence and consequences are hardly recognizable without performing a critical examination to uncover it. This type of examination easily leads to one conclusion: Racism is real and unlikely to be eradicated, despite incremental changes.

The underrepresentation of certain groups in higher education has continued to generate much interest. Full participation of minority groups remains a difficult issue to resolve; the participation rates of African Americans and Blacks in institutions of higher learning are especially disturbing (Holland, 1993). Studies have shown that colleges and universities have lost ground in the enrollment of AA/Black students (American Council on Education, 1987; Chandler, 1988, quoted in Holland, 1993), in the proportion of AA/Black students granted graduate and doctoral degrees (Williams, 1989) and in the number of African Americans in research and faculty positions in its universities (American Council on Education, 1987; Brown, 1988; Frierson, 1990).

Holland (1993) postulated that the gradual decline in the numbers of African Americans and Blacks involved in administrative, faculty, and research positions was linked to the participation and graduation rates of AA/Black students in doctoral programs. In the past, many scholars suggested that the pipeline (i.e., from which AA/Black faculty members were produced) was drying up. Common explanations for the significant decline of minorities were (a) that minorities come from low-income families and consequently did not want to take on the extra financial burden of graduate study; (b) that they were most often attracted to professional

schools; and (c) that, in general, academe has been inhospitable toward AA/Black students (Holland, 1993).

Scott (2016) suggested that the experience of Black males in upper-level administrative positions at PWIs has often been ignored in the higher-education literature. This dearth of literature on Black male administrators is directly linked to the lack of attention PWIs have given to increasing the number of Black males in the administrative ranks, particularly in comparison with the effort expended to increase the number of Black male students and faculty. To date, there has not been an intentional, extensive effort among PWIs to significantly diversify their administrative ranks in comparable ways. According to Howard (2014), statistics show that in the fall of 2011, Black men held 3.6% of all executive, senior, and upper administrative positions in U.S. institutions of higher education. That percentage includes HBCUs, where Black males are overrepresented in executive administrative positions (Gasman & Commodore, 2014).

Scott (2016) hypothesized that recent actions and initiatives for attaining diversity and inclusion on college campuses have primarily targeted the student and faculty ranks. Though this effort is admirable, diversifying the senior administration level has largely been neglected. Recruiting and retaining Black males and females for senior administrative positions at PWIs can be a significant step toward establishing this type of diversity.

Scholars (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lett & Wright, 2003) suggest that attracting, enrolling and retaining a diverse body of students is a growing concern at U.S. universities, particularly at PWIs. According to the 2016 Standards of the Council for Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), accredited counselor-education programs must demonstrate "systematic efforts to attract, enroll and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community" (p. 4). Johnson, Bradley,

Knight, and Bradshaw (2007) surveyed 29 CACREP-accredited doctoral programs in order to assess the degree to which CES programs are prioritizing this CACREP initiative in relation to African Americans. They found that 148 of 825 students (17.9%) were African American. Considering that African Americans comprised 6.9% of all doctorates in 2009 (National Science Foundation, 2010), these results strongly suggest adequate representation.

Despite this, there is still minimal literature on the experiences of AA/Black doctoral students in counselor-education programs. Henfield, Woo, and Washington (2013), in a phenomenological study, explored 11 African American doctoral students' perceptions of challenging experiences in counselor-education programs. Through structured and semistructured interviews, the authors identified the following themes, using critical race theory: feelings of isolation, peer disconnection, and misunderstanding and disrespect from faculty. Clearly the challenges facing AA/Black doctoral students still persist, and they promote feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction that can complicate the doctoral process (Daniel, 2007; Shealey, 2009). Henfield et al.'s findings regarding feelings of isolation were consistent with earlier reported experiences of African American doctoral students at PWIs in general (Lewis et al., 2004).

A second theme in Henfield et al.'s 2013 study, peer disconnection, appeared to be related to the quality of program orientation and classroom interactions. According to Harper and Hurtado (2007) and Henfield et al. (2011), poor bonding with White peers is a consistent finding in the literature on AA/Black students attending PWIs at all levels of education. Because of lack of communication and positive interaction with peers, participants often felt misunderstood and disrespected and consequently failed to build positive working relationships (Henfield et al., 2013). Previous studies have suggested that connections between doctoral students and their

peers is essential (Gay, 2004), even in counseling-education programs (Henfield et al., 2011). Most participants noted several factors that interfered with the formation of important relationships; some suggested the prevalence of subtle racism (Henfield et al., 2013).

Disrespect from faculty members toward students of color was the third theme in this 2013 study. The findings suggested that faculty did not respect student differences and that this was manifested in poor mentoring relationships, a faculty expectation that all students would get along with one another, and the perception in students of color that they were marginalized on the basis of dress (Henfield et al., 2013). Henfield et al. further posited that these student perceptions may reflect subtle pressure from faculty to assimilate into the culture of the program; this suggestion is consistent with studies conducted with other doctoral students in counseling-education programs. As noted earlier, one of the participants in the study admitted to behaving differently around faculty in the counseling-education program, which is a typical response among oppressed people. For centuries, AA/Black people have frequently behaved like members of the mainstream culture so that they could gain approval and appear to be less of a threat.

The disconnect, lack of respect, and poor mentoring relationships that African American students reported in this study are consistent with previous findings (Patton, 2009; Shealey, 2009). According to View and Frederick (2011), the disconnect between faculty members and African American students is disconcerting because constructive and fruitful relationships with faculty help to facilitate the development of skills that are essential for AA/Black students' ongoing development and future aspirations.

Lett and Wright (2003) suggested that when students are accepted into an institution of higher education, the responsibility should lie with the university to protect, develop, and graduate students who are psychologically and academically sound, and in doing so, provide an

atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion. Henfield et al. (2013) stated that rather than emphasizing what students need to do to overcome their challenges, the onus should be on counseling-education programs to institute proactive changes.

The literature suggests that mentoring relationships provide critical personal and professional development opportunities. These relationships are especially important for racial minorities, who often lack access to the informal networks and information that are necessary for success in academic and professional environments in which minorities are underrepresented. The lack of mentors for minority graduate students is important given the potential impact of this problem, not only on minority graduate students' retention and subsequent success, but also on the future diversity of CES programs, especially in the areas of teaching and research (Thomas et al., 2007).

Johnson and Ridley (2004) described mentoring relationships as mutual personal relationships that involve an experienced person as a role model and teacher for a less-experienced person. Bell-Ellison and Dedrick (2008) suggested that at the doctoral level, a mentoring relationship is viewed as having a vital role in degree completion because there is a great deal of influence on the professional and emotional development of the student. Mentoring is believed to be an important practice that supports and aids in the persistence of most doctoral students, and it is strongly recommended for African Americans at all educational levels (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). According to Harper (2006), mentoring for African Americans is essential for success because a mentoring relationship has been found to provide validation and encouragement.

Golde (2000) postulated that when there is a positive relationship between the student and the faculty advisor, the successful completion of the program can typically be predicted. On

the other hand, negative advisor-advisee relationships can contribute to doctoral-student attrition. Golde (2000) used a case-study method to determine why three doctoral students from three different universities and disciplines decided to quit their programs. The findings revealed one recurring factor: All three participants had difficulties with their advisors. Maher, Ford, and Thompson (2004) theorized that the relationships that doctoral students build with their advisors greatly affect degree progress, particularly in the dissertation stage. Bloom, Propst Cuevas, Hall, and Evans (2007) supported Maher et al. (2004) by stating that the student-advisor relationship is the most important factor in graduate-student success.

The American Psychological Association (APA) in 1994 commissioned a 15-member panel to examine issues in ethnic-minority recruitment, retention, and training. The panel was a response to a shortage of ethnically diverse faculty in professional programs like counseling and clinical psychology (APA, 1996; quoted in Hill, Castillo, Ngu, & Pepion, 1999). The panel's findings highlighted several barriers that may have prevented ethnic minorities from pursuing academic careers, including (a) that few ethnic minority students received specific training, encouragement, and mentoring from faculty advisors with regard to entering academia; (b) that reasonable academic networking opportunities were not made available to ethnic-minority graduate students; and (c) that many university departments were not serious in their recruitment practices about building an ethnically diverse faculty core for the purpose of mentoring ethnic-minority students (Hill et al., 1999).

Holland (1993) asserted that several scholars have posited the importance of faculty-student relationships for college students in general. For example, Austin (1977; quoted in Holland, 1993) conducted a longitudinal study of more than 200,000 students at 300 institutions of higher education and found that faculty-student interaction had a stronger impact on the

college experience for students than any other variable or any other student characteristic. Pantages and Creedon (1978) also studied college students' attrition rates and suggested that "the quality of the relationship between a student and his/her professors is of crucial importance in determining satisfaction with the institution" (p. 79).

Feldman and Newcomb (1976) scrutinized the impact of the college experience on students and reported that faculty relationships with students help with intellectual development and career decision making. A study done in the early 1960s by Lathrop and Stein (1962) found that the most frequently reported academic experience that led to college teaching was a career decision related to faculty-student relationships. However, other studies have found that faculty do not have a significant impact on student development, especially at the undergraduate level. A study by Quananatelli, Heflich, and Yutzy (1964) found that teachers were not consequential individuals in the social development of students and reported that faculty were insignificant in shaping students' attitudes or perceptions. These scholars found that faculty members do not have influence in matters outside of the classroom (i.e., nontechnical matters).

Furthermore, Feldman and Newcomb (1976) reported that even though most college undergraduate students were satisfied with the intellectual level of stimulation they received from faculty, they were not pleased with their relationships with college professors; students reported little contact with faculty outside the classroom. Gaff and Gaff (1984) reported that the quality of the faculty-student relationship actually depends on the amount of time both parties are willing to give to the relationship (Holland, 1993).

The findings about undergraduates noted in the previous two paragraphs do not provide convincing evidence of the impact of those undergraduate faculty-student relationships. Even though one might assume that undergraduate students would benefit from more contact with

faculty outside of the classroom, studies do not suggest that students want these relationships to be highly personal. Feldman and Newcomb's (1976) study of undergraduate students in the 1960s reported that although students generally reported infrequent contacts with professors outside of the classroom, most of the students did not suggest a preference for close and personal kinds of contact. The students generally asserted that they wanted their relationships with their professors to be professional in nature, but with more frequent contact (Holland, 1993).

Conversely, at the graduate level, the situation is different. Katz and Hartnett (1976) suggested that graduate students' relations with faculty members is considered by most students to be the single most important aspect of their graduate experience. The same study found that many students viewed relationships with faculty to be the single most disappointing aspect of their graduate experience. These findings have accentuated the pivotal role that faculty-student relationships have on the student experience (Holland, 1993).

Even though the literature suggests the critical role of faculty-student interactions, little empirical research has been conducted on what makes these mentoring relationships beneficial to graduate students. Further, as stated earlier, there is no research at all on the specific population of interest here—AA/Black doctoral students enrolled in CACREP-accredited doctoral CES programs. It is important to learn about the factors in doctoral programs that may potentially guide, motivate, and influence AA/Black students to pursue careers in counselor education and supervision.

This study was to explore faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences involving eight AA/Black doctoral students in CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs. This study identified and explored themes from one doctoral student who dropped out of the program and seven who are still enrolled in their programs.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was guided by relational-cultural theory, or RCT. This theory (Lenz, 2016; Miller, 1976) is a contemporary psychodynamic framework for understanding human development and is based on the assumption that people's happiness and well-being are a product of the degree to which they participate in growth-fostering relationships. I relied on this idea as I conducted research and interpreted the faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black CES doctoral students.

Scholars (Jordan, 2010; Ruiz, 2012) have suggested that RCT is a fitting conceptual framework for advising relationships aimed at increasing the relational support for underrepresented doctoral students, specifically because it is responsive to, and inclusive of, multicultural considerations. RCT was originally developed from the work of Jean Baker Miller (1976) and colleagues at the Stone Center to better understand the experiences of women (Jean Baker Miller Training Institute, 2014). The application of RCT has been extended to members of other marginalized groups.

RCT recognizes that individuals grow and learn through mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships based on empathy and authenticity (Jordan, 2000; Miller, 1976). Purgason, Avent, Cashwell, Jordan, and Reese (2016) suggested that the RCT framework can be used as an important pedagogical tool to help mentors (a) understand the challenges encountered by mentees as a result of their racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds and (b) explore experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and oppression. Other scholars have suggested that RCT differs from other feminist and developmental theories precisely because the RCT approach places emphasis on the larger cultural and social context (Frey, 2013; West, 2005).

Applications of RCT have appeared in the counseling and counselor-education literature (Duffey, Haberstroh, & Trepal, 2009; Duffey & Somody, 2011). Duffey and Heather (2016) suggested RCT as an approach to human growth and development in which increased connection and deepened mutuality are hallmarks of mature functioning. In RCT, people's need for connection is primary because the ability to navigate relationships serves as the vehicle for growth. According to RCT, people's ability to negotiate conflict in relationships is important, and this is often influenced by relational templates or past experiences as well as by their ideas about themselves and their expectations in relationships (Jordan, 2010). Additionally, the RCT approach focuses on societal stratifications around aspects of identity and negotiating the intersections of these competing locations of privilege and oppression (Walker, 2004). Other scholars have supported the efficacy of the relational-cultural approach (Oakley et al., 2013; Tantillo & Sanftner, 2003). Research into neuroplasticity has also bolstered the relational-cultural approach by focusing on connections and by showing how the repairing of relationships is mapped in the brain via neuropathways (Cozolino, 2006).

Judith (Judy) Jordan is one of the original proponents of RCT. She, along with Jean Baker Miller, Irene Stiver, and Jan Surrey, helped to pioneer the theoretical movement away from an ideal of individuation and separation and toward an appreciation of the centrality and power of connection in people's lives. Judy currently serves as the director for the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at the Wellesley Centers for Women. Along with her colleagues at the institute, she applies RCT to a culture that historically values an ethic of individualism (Trepal & Duffey, 2016).

Scholars have applied RCT as a conceptual framework to the relationship between supervisor and supervisee and to multicultural and social-justice competencies (Comstock et al.,

2008). Brinson and Kottler (1993) reported on previous conceptualizations of cross-cultural and relationally oriented mentoring (Schlosser, Lyons, Talleyrand, Kim, & Johnson, 2011; Walker, 2006), but the literature lacks an applied doctoral-advising framework theoretically grounded in RCT—one that is sensitive to multicultural issues and provides specific strategies to facilitate relationship development. Such strategies should include ways to address power differentials (e.g., gatekeeping and evaluation; Purgason et al., 2016). The purpose of this research is to apply RCT to the faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black CES doctoral students—to either identify themes related to lived experiences from those relationships, or to record the lack of such relationships.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A review of the literature on AA/Black doctoral students' personal experiences with faculty-student mentoring relationships revealed a dearth of qualitative studies, particularly in relation to CACREP-accredited CES programs.

Rationale for Qualitative Method

The purpose of this research was to identify, through interviews, some themes related to the mentoring-relationship experiences of these AA/Black doctoral students. I gathered the accounts of one AA/Black doctoral dropout and seven current students in their own words by using qualitative research methods. The data that have been collected from this study add to the body of knowledge about doctoral mentoring relationships and help to supply what has been lacking in the current qualitative studies. RCT was used to facilitate the accounts of lived experiences by encouraging students to tell their own stories as an effective means to combat negative stereotypes of minorities. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative study is an inquiry process that allows researchers to understand a social human problem through the detailed views of informants. In this particular study, the informants are AA/Black CES doctoral students. As the researcher in this study, I tried to build a complex, holistic picture, formed through words and discussions and conducted in a natural setting.

Phenomenological Approach

In this study, I employed a phenomenological research design. I selected this approach because it was ideal for examining experiences or consciousness from a first-person perspective (Creswell, 2013; Merleau-Ponty, 2012; Smith, 2013). A phenomenological approach was the

method of inquiry most appropriate for this type of study because it examines through direct questioning the phenomenon and its influence in the lives of AA/Black doctoral students in pursuit of a doctoral degree in CES.

According to Giorgi (2012), phenomenology does not dictate to phenomena but rather seeks to understand how phenomena present themselves to consciousness. Because the phenomena are illustrated with examples from participant surroundings and encounters, it is possible to understand how those encounters may influence the thinking of the person concerned. Smith (2013) suggested that the purpose of phenomenology is to give meaning to the perceptions and experiences of the participants being studied and to provide a descriptive analysis of the faculty-student relationship experiences of AA/Black students.

This research study explored how faculty-student relationship experiences contributed to students' success or attrition while they were in a CES doctoral program. Several prescribed steps were involved, following the phenomenological model. First, I have provided an explanation of the research topic, followed by a literature review of the subject matter, to provide a general understanding of AA/Black student experiences in graduate school. Next, I selected a sample population and collected the lived experiences of this sample population through telephone interviews. After this, I engaged in 12 rounds of data analysis (studying the themes uncovered from these lived experiences), followed by a written synthesis of the lived experiences captured in the findings. I substantiated the written synthesis with a representation of the lived experiences of the phenomenon, including a level of analysis of which the participants were unaware. Finally, I have produced a written document in which I will discuss how the varying elements were experienced by the participants in the study (Giorgi, 2009).

The final decision to approach the study through a qualitative phenomenological design was guided by recommendations from dissertation committee members and my own desire to explore what the participants had in common in relation to their "shared lived experiences" in the doctoral program (Creswell, 2013, p. 213. I was interested in exploring their lived experiences, and I examined their perspectives on those experiences to understand why they either persisted to doctoral completion or discontinued the program.

Creswell (2013) suggested that a phenomenological approach is often used in educational research to generate a portrayal of the fundamental nature of participants' collective experiences, rather than an analysis of the experience itself. Merriam (2002) noted that with phenomenological research, a researcher looks at questions about the daily experiences of a group. In this study, the focus was on those students who have participated in the CES doctoral-program experience. A qualitative design was selected here to facilitate understanding of what those experiences meant to the students themselves, as seen through their own eyes (Hatch, 2002).

Merriam (2002) suggested that interviews are the main source of data for phenomenological research. In this research, the interviews allowed the researcher, through the communication of experiences and ideas, to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences that were explored (Janesick, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Outcome data in this study consisted of participants' responses to interview questions that were designed to explore their experiences with faculty-student relationships.

This study was conducted in two phases: the individual interviews, and the coding and analysis of the data from participant responses. Inductive analysis—described by Hatch (2002) as a search for patterns of meaning in data—was thoroughly implemented so that general

statements about experiences under investigation were made. Creswell (2013) suggested that persons who have experienced the phenomenon being studied should be chosen. I intended to recruit 9 to 11 participants who had had faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences in a CES doctoral program. Eight participants who had been through these experiences provided rich data in response to the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Prior to this study, there were no studies in the counselor-education literature that addressed the faculty-student relationship experiences of AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs. This study now fills that gap by providing data that suggest how these students view faculty-student relationship experiences. The findings from this study could be used to assist with two goals. First, there is a real need for culturally sensitive programs in counselor education—programs with real potential to facilitate faculty-student mentoring founded on relational-cultural theory. Second, it is my hope that these findings will motivate faculty to engage on this issue and really develop faculty-student relationships that enhance the learning and professional development of AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs.

Method

The qualitative paradigm employed here adds to a unique interpretation of AA/Black doctoral-student experiences. It also complements quantitative studies of other doctoral-degree completions, noncompletions, and retentions pertaining to AA/Black students by illustrating the actual experiences of these students (Felder, 2010).

The primary data-gathering method for this research was paper-based research questionnaires. The questions were used to elicit themes from the participating students. The participants were asked questions to help uncover their views about faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). According to Marshall and Rossman, the

questionnaires allowed the researcher to elicit the participants' views without inserting his own. This method was chosen because the intent of the study was to gather the unbiased views of the participants.

Data Collection

With permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB; Approval No. FY19-20-215), I e-mailed recruitment letters to 11 potential participants. In these letters I included the background of the study, the requirements for participation, and a link to an online Survey Monkey survey. Prospective participants then logged into and completed a survey that determined their eligibility to participate in the study. Each of the prospective participants was purposefully chosen because they were AA/Black CES doctoral students.

Since I am an AA/Black CES doctoral student at a PWI, contact was already established. I e-mailed recruitment letters to the 11 prospective participants and asked for their participation in the study. In the recruitment letter, I provided a full disclosure of my research intentions and the clear message that participation was voluntary (Hatch, 2002). After the participants completed the online survey, they sent me an e-mail to inform me that they had done so. From the survey data, I determined the participants' eligibility and then e-mailed them the consent document to sign and return to me by e-mail within two days. All eight eligible participants signed and returned the consent form prior to the interviews. After receiving the consent forms, I contacted the participants to schedule the interviews. In the consent document, I included background information on the project as well as information about me (Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Hatch (2002) stated that participants must fully understand the "intentions of the research" (p. 67) and that the researcher must assure each individual that participation is voluntary and that the participant may withdraw from the study at any time. Because I am also an

AA/Black CES doctoral student in the doctoral program where the participants were recruited, I had the added responsibility to be sensitive to the potential vulnerability that some participants might have felt. Participants were invited to participate with a full understanding of why I was conducting the research and why I would appreciate their assistance. I assured them that their interviews would remain confidential. I explained that those who chose to participate would be asked to participate in an interview lasting approximately one hour and that their responses would be recorded and subsequently transcribed. It was my responsibility as the researcher to assure the potential participants that participation in the study was voluntary and to inform them that the results of the study would be shared with appropriate stakeholders (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Data for this phenomenological qualitative study were collected in the form of formal or "structured" (Hatch, 2002, p. 94) in-depth interviews led by an interview guide. Interviews were scheduled over a one-week period, June 15 through June 22, 2020. They lasted from 21 to 47 minutes and were audiotaped with the permission of the participants. As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 110), I also took detailed notes during each interview in order to remember trains of thought or questions that I might want to pursue. The eight interviews were immediately transcribed through Rev.com to expedite the process and to ensure accuracy, resulting in 81 pages of text and reflecting approximately five hours of interviewing.

The interviews took place by phone in a private office. All transcribed data were stored on a USB flash drive in my home in a secure location. Existing transcribed data on my computer were copied to an external hard drive, which was secured with a password; the data were then deleted from the computer. The stored information will remain secured and will be destroyed in five years.

The following questions in the interview guide were designed to guide the students in describing their lived experiences related to faculty-student mentoring relationships.

General Questions

1. What does faculty-student mentorship mean for you?

2. What does a mentoring relationship look like in academia?

3. What role does a faculty member or a student play in establishing a mentoring relationship?

4. What might a mentoring relationship look like at a distance, through technology?

5. What are some of the challenges that you have experienced in trying to establish faculty-student mentoring relationships?

6. What are the outcomes when these relationships are not available?

7. How will the knowledge gained from this study help the faculty, the students, and the CES departments?

Individual Questions

1. Describe your prior experience of mentorship.

2. Have you ever had a positive mentorship experience prior to coming to graduate school?

3. What are the experiences of African American/Black doctoral students?

4. How do African American/Black doctoral students perceive their doctoral experience?

5. Why do African American/Black doctoral students persist to doctoral-degree completion?

Data Analysis

I chose the inductive approach as the most applicable method for analyzing the data because this approach proceeds from the specific to the general, illuminating the relationships among the different aspects. Once the interview transcriptions were completed, each response was attached to one of the research questions in order to establish themes later. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested that researchers note initial similarities in the data that repeat an idea essential to their research questions. I began the iterative process of reading and rereading each transcription and kept notes to begin the process of reducing thoughts and statements into initial codes. This iterative sequence of reading and rereading allowed me to identify recurrences of ideas and themes that then led to key words and phrases; each of these key words and phrases was assigned a code (Creswell, 2013, p. 240). Hatch (2002) suggested that identifying the frames for analysis in the early readings of the data sets the framework for how a researcher begins to break down the data into parts to be analyzed.

Hatch (2002) posited that the researcher should structure the reading of the data by identifying "frames of analysis" (p. 162). These frames of analysis are the levels of specificity with which the data will be considered. As I read the interview data, I looked for significant statements from participants as they responded to the experience (the phenomenon), valuing each statement as equal, followed by rereading with the intention of grouping the statements into themes (Hatch, 2002). I looked for themes in participants' responses that related to the research questions, which enabled me to emphasize phrases that described the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The focus of data analysis was to identify themes in the data that corresponded to participants' lived experiences in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships, so that I could make some generalizations.

Then, sections based on relational statements were generated in order to observe what was happening in the data and to begin assigning emphasis to words and phrases. I read the data with "specific semantic relationships in mind" (Creswell, 2013, p. 241). As I read each transcript line by line, I noted in the margins particular statements or phrases that indicated how the participants had perceived their lived experiences in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships. Further, the inductive approach enabled me to identify "salient" (Creswell, 2013, p. 242) domains and determine which ones were important to the study and which ones were not. I then assigned them a code, reread the data, and noted relational connections (pp. 168–169). Next, I aligned the collective statements with particular questions. The transcripts were then examined further for their significance or relevance to the participants' lived experiences. Finally, from the participant responses, a framework emerged, indicating the relationships among the domains; I selected examples of the data that supported this framework.

This framework, in turn, formed the basis for what Creswell (2013) described as the participants' collective lived experiences: a "textural" and "structural description" of the "essence" of those experiences (p. 230). The inductive-analysis approach maximized the likelihood that the data and subsequent findings would lead to generalizations that would address the research questions.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was that of an informed and experienced inquirer, because I am myself an AA/Black doctoral student in a CES program. I have had personal experiences that may be similar to the phenomena under exploration in this study. As an AA/Black doctoral student, I have had enough experiences related to faculty-student mentoring to enable me to ask relevant interview questions. This research was significant because there were no studies

available in the counseling literature about the faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) asserted that it is necessary for researchers to examine how their own perspectives and ideas may be reflected in the study. They also suggested that the researcher should be careful in designing questions to ensure that bias does not influence the findings. I did ask questions specifically about participants' views on their faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences. In the interviews, I acknowledged my vested interest in the study's findings, but I also made it known that the purpose of the study was to improve faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences. I did not dwell on any negative aspects of the phenomenon.

Creswell (2013) asserted that qualitative researchers generally create their own data-collection instruments and interview guides, rather than relying on others' tools. Data in this study were collected in the form of participant responses to the interview questionnaires that were created for the study. Prior to the interviews, all requisite steps were taken to gain permission from the university for permission to conduct the research.

Participants

For this study, the data pool consisted of AA/Black students who have enrolled in doctoral counseling-education programs—one who dropped out and several others who are still enrolled. AA/Black students are defined as individuals of African descent who identify themselves as native-born Americans, as well as those who came into the United States from other countries and self-selected this cultural group on institutional application materials.

Sample

This study was based on in-depth interviews of AA/Black doctoral students in the CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs at a private university in the United States. Racial

selection was based on the participants' own designation of race or ethnicity, as indicated in school records. As stated earlier, the sample included one student who had dropped out of the program and some who are currently in the program.

Research practices associated with this study were in compliance with the ethical standards and guidelines set forth by Liberty University. Because this study required interaction with human subjects, I applied for and received permission from the Institutional Review Board prior to commencing the study. The CES doctoral students were identified by contacting LU's Department of Behavioral Sciences and Family Studies. A letter from this department or from the institutional alumni office invited alumni and currently enrolled students who met the research criteria to participate in the study. Participants who were included in the study were all current or former doctoral students in CES and were African American or Black. The researcher contacted the eight individual students (or former students) and asked them for their cooperation in the study. Those who agreed to participate were made aware of their role and their responsibilities; they were also informed that they had the option to leave the study at their discretion (Terrell, 2015).

Eligibility

Participants were given a brief online Survey Monkey survey consisting of eight questions that the researcher used to determine eligibility. Eight out of nine participants who received recruitment letters completed the online survey. All participants ($N = 8$) identified as African American/Black; six participants were female and two were male. Three participants were between 21 and 29 years of age, three were between 30 and 39 years of age, and two were between 50 and 59 years of age. (Some students did not disclose their actual age.) Seven participants ($n = 7$) were currently enrolled in a CES doctoral program, and one ($n = 1$) had

dropped out of a CES doctoral program. A majority of participants ($n = 7$) had attended their CES doctoral program continuously; there was one exception ($n = 1$). Participants reported that they had peer mentors and program advisors, but not faculty mentors. Participants reported that their program advisors were White. Six participants reported that even though they had program advisors, they did not know who those advisors were because they had never met them face to face or talked to them on the telephone. One participant who is about to complete the program reported that she just recently found out from another student that she has an assigned program advisor; she also does not have a peer mentor. All participants were attending a CES doctoral program at a PWI.

All participants identified themselves as African American/Black. Participants' self-defined ethnicity, pseudonyms, and demographic information are included in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participants' Pseudonyms and Demographic Profiles

Pseudonym	Sex	Self-defined Ethnicity	Institutional Racial Makeup
Jane	Female	AA/Black	Predominantly White institution
Olga	Female	AA/Black	Predominantly White institution
Paulette	Female	AA/Black	Predominantly White institution
Saeed	Male	AA/Black	Predominantly White institution
George	Male	AA/Black (dropped out)	Predominantly White institution
Lilian	Female	AA/Black	Predominantly White institution
Shelby	Female	AA/Black	Predominantly White institution
Meera	Female	AA/Black	Predominantly White institution

Instruments

A semistructured interview questionnaire was administered by the researcher. The interview questions were open-ended and were designed in such a way as to give respondents the opportunity to articulate their own views related to faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, analyzed, and synthesized before final results were produced.

Data-collection Procedures

The participants were contacted by e-mail for the purpose of scheduling the in-depth interviews. The individual interviews were completed primarily by telephone, and they lasted for one hour. Interviews were conducted by me, a researcher who is an AA/Black doctoral student in a CES program. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggested that research participants are more willing to talk in depth if they find that the person conducting the study is familiar or sympathetic to their experiences. Prior to conducting the interviews, I obtained each participant's informed consent by e-mail. The informed-consent statement contained the following:

- a description of the study and its purpose;

- the information the participant would be asked to provide;

- a description of what the participant would be asked to do;

- a description of potential risks and benefits to individual participants;

- a statement that participation was voluntary and that the participant could withdraw at any time without penalty;

- reassurance that all data would be kept confidential;

- the name and phone number of a person the participant could call to get further information about the research;

- the name and phone number of a person (other than the researcher) the participant could call if he or she has any complaints as a result of participating in the study; and

- means and ways for the participant and the researcher to sign the form.

The consent form was thoroughly explained to the participants before they signed it.

Data Analysis and Procedures

Marshall and Rossman (2014) described data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a qualitative case study. They suggested that analysis should start early in the research process and should continue as the researchers progress; this allows them to adjust their observation strategies (by shifting emphasis toward the experiences that bear upon the development of the researcher's understanding) and to exercise control generally over the emerging ideas (by testing them as they emerge).

Analysis procedures entail (a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (c) testing the emergent understandings; (d) searching for alternative explanations; and (e) writing the report. In the final section of this study, I developed generalizations from the views provided by the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Strength of the Design

The research design allowed for a review of the literature that related to the faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs. The interrelatedness of the reviewed literature and the data collected from the study created a final product that will persuade readers and develop a framework for my own guidance as the researcher. This design required me to develop a logical plan that guided and directed this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

The assumptions of the study included the following:

1. The study participants provided open, honest, and truthful responses to the interview questions.

2. The study participants held a profound interest in participating in the study.

3. The inclusion criteria were appropriate and yielded a sample population that had experienced a similar phenomenon of mentoring.

4. This research was needed in the scholarly community.

Limitations

The study was not generalizable to all CES programs, for the following reasons:

1. The study was limited to AA/Black doctoral students.

2. The study participants were students in a CES doctoral program.

3. Because of the study's small sample size, results may not be generalized.

4. The results may be influenced by participant biases.

5. Individuals interviewed in the study may not represent their respective cultural group.

6. The data may be open to multiple interpretations, depending on cultural differences (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

7. The data was dependent on the cooperation of a small group of willing students.

8. The data was especially dependent on the openness and honesty of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

9. The study depended on the ability of the researcher to be resourceful, systematic, and honest (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

The third item in this list bears repeating: This qualitative study was focused on a small sample of AA/Black doctoral students, and therefore its findings cannot be generalized to the general population. Another limitation of the study is the ethnicity of the researcher. The researcher recognizes that his personal views could influence the study in a variety of ways, such as how the questions were asked, how the answers were documented, and how the data were reported. These concerns were mitigated by my making every effort to remain aware of my own biases and to avoid injecting my own perspectives into the research process. This process began by my acknowledging that I was a CES doctoral student in the same program as the study participants and that I shared similar lived experiences. I also took a neutral approach in conducting the study, to avoid conflict; I endeavored to provide a "cushion" for the participants due to the similarities we shared. The members of the research committee were consulted often during the data collection and interpretation process to ensure an unbiased outcome. One thing that ensured that the research was authentic was the use of a strong study design. Qualitative research validity was affected by the researcher's perceptions of validity and by the choice of paradigm (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Data Analysis

Data analysis included the following five distinct phases.

Organizing the Data

The data were organized based on the sex of the participants. (The participants themselves provided their gender when they completed the eligibility survey.) The data were presented in the same order.

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Generating Categories

The categories were generated through the development of themes that emerged in the data.

Testing the Emergent Understandings

Participants' emergent understandings were tested by asking them follow-up questions. The purpose of these questions was to prompt the respondents to clarify or elaborate on their original responses.

Searching for Alternative Explanations

The interview involved asking doctoral students questions about other possible themes or views pertaining to their faculty-student relationship experiences in their past academic endeavors (i.e., prior to enrolling in the CACREP-accredited CES doctoral program). These questions were asked to challenge the respondents to take the middle path in answering the interview questions.

<div align="center">

Research Question

</div>

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore and identify the faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black doctoral CES students. The research question that guided this study is, what are the lived experiences of AA/Black doctoral CES students in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships? The study was guided by seven subquestions that were used to direct the interviews. The subquestions were designed to get to the point of the inquiry while leaving room for follow-up questions that emerged from participant responses (Hatch, 2002). Hatch suggested that the researcher drive the initial

direction of the interview with planned questions but then allow participant responses to direct

the flow of the conversation, and that is how the interviews were conducted in this study.

Subquestions

1. What does faculty-student mentorship mean for you?

2. What does a mentoring relationship look like in academia?

3. What role does a faculty member or a student play in establishing a mentoring relationship?

4. What might a mentoring relationship look like at a distance, through technology?

5. What are some of the challenges that you have experienced in trying to establish faculty-student mentoring relationships?

6. What are the outcomes when these relationships are not available?

7. How will the knowledge gained from this study help the faculty, the students, and the CES departments?

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted at a private university in Virginia with eight AA/Black CES doctoral students who are either currently enrolled or had dropped out of the program. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore and identify the faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black doctoral CES students. A phenomenological approach was determined to be the most appropriate method of inquiry for this type of study because it examined through direct questioning the phenomenon and its influence in the lives of these particular students. The study was intended to improve the faculty-student mentoring experiences of AA/Black CES doctoral students, in view of the vital role that faculty mentors can play in the development of future AA/Black leaders.

The study was based on the following overarching research question: What are the lived experiences of African American/Black doctoral CES students in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships?

This section includes an in-depth analysis of participant responses and describes how participant responses were used to explain the phenomena in the study. The data collection process mentioned in Chapter 3 is described here in greater detail.

Bracketing is the process that a researcher uses to set aside personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions about the research topic. The researcher also sets aside knowledge of previous research findings and theories about the research topic. Through bracketing the researcher identified his own lived experiences as an AA/B doctoral CES student in the same program and deliberately set aside those experiences order to reduce possible own biases. The

researcher engaged in bracketing before facilitating the 12 semistructured interviews to examine possible personal biases that could influence data collection and the understanding of narrative. The dissertation committee members served in the capacity of bracketing colleagues. As an African doctoral CES student myself, when I thought of a theoretical framework for this study, my mind naturally went straight to CRT without thinking about the biases that may come with it. The dissertation defense gave me profound insight into possible biases and preconceived notions that are tied to the theory—things I was not cognizant of previously.

The rationale for changing CRT to RTC was that RTC was deemed to be a psychodynamic framework that was useful for understanding the AA/Black doctoral CES students' development. It assumes that their happiness and well-being were a product of the degree to which they participated in growth-fostering relationships. This bracketing process allowed me as the researcher to develop a clearer picture of the phenomenon in question, and it helped me to manage my emotions with regard to this sensitive qualitative-research topic. Additionally, I was able to achieve a deeper level of researcher engagement and integration throughout all aspects of the qualitative-research endeavor (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

It is obvious that researcher bias is possible; it does exist, but through bracketing I was able to maintain openness and was able to focus on the research questions, illuminating untapped areas participants needed to explore. The participants were given every opportunity to give voice to their lived experiences, guided by the configuration of the specific questions in the semistructured interview (found in Appendix A), but the interpretation of their narratives was limited to the comments they made that were connected to the questions. For this reason, the researcher employed the bracketing method as a guide in clearly and accurately constructing

participants' perspectives on the phenomena as they voiced their experiences (Tufford &

Newman, 2012).

The analyses of the phenomenological qualitative data, in relation to the lived

experiences of AA/Black CES doctoral students, revealed five themes related to the essence of

the phenomenon. Guidelines used to analyze and interpret the data included listening to

recordings several times; taking notes; transcribing data; reviewing research questions and the

purpose of the evaluations; categorizing data and patterns; and, lastly, interpreting the data by

attaching meaning and significance (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). At the time of the

semistructured interviews, seven participants were successfully enrolled in CES doctoral

programs, and one had dropped out. The data analysis was suggestive of the demands of these

programs—the academic rigor, the general challenges, the importance of support, and the need

for social relationships—demands that the counseling literature suggests significantly affect

AA/Black graduate students in counselor-education programs. In general, a majority of

participants shared positive responses; however, some reported negative experiences. To protect

their identities, all participants were assigned code identifiers (ranging from 01 to 07).

Findings

As stated earlier, the theoretical framework of this study was guided by RCT—relational-

cultural theory. Lenz (2016) explained that RCT (Miller, 1976) is a contemporary

psychodynamic framework for understanding human development based on the assumption that

people's happiness and well-being are a product of the degree to which they participate in

growth-fostering relationships. To understand the faculty-student mentoring-relationship

experiences of AA/Black doctoral students, I relied on RCT.

The study results are organized by themes derived from the data, and they address the overarching research question:

What are the lived experiences of African American/Black doctoral CES students in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships?

This section includes the themes generated from the data—themes discovered from my analysis of the responses to the interview questions. The section also shows how participants' responses to the interview questions addressed the research inquiry of the study. The themes are included in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Themes That Emerged From the Interview Responses

Themes	Corresponding subthemes
Belonging within the AA/Black community	a. Belonging with AA/Black peers
	b. Belonging with AA/Black professors
Coping	a. Regulating emotional distress
	b. Creating a network of social support outside of the classroom
Support	From faculty, peers, family, self, faith/God
Racism	a. Overcoming influential personal trauma
	b. Normalizing White spaces
Multiculturalism.	a. Experiencing a cultural disconnect with White professors and peers
	b. Internalizing cultural competence
Invisibility	Unknown…unseen…just a number… not understood

Themes

Five general themes emerged from the interview responses after conducting data analysis (Moustakas, 1994; Van Kaam, 1959). The themes were as follows: belonging within the AA/Black community, coping, racism, multiculturalism, and invisibility. Each theme and the corresponding subthemes are presented below.

1. Belonging within the AA/Black community

    a. Belonging with AA/Black peers

    b. Belonging with AA/Black professors

2. Coping

    a. Regulating emotional distress

    b. Creating a network of social support outside of the classroom

3. Racism

    a. Overcoming influential personal trauma

    b. Normalizing White spaces

4. Multiculturism

    a. Experiencing a cultural disconnect with White professors and peers

    b. Internalizing cultural competence

5. Invisibility: unknown…unseen…just a number

Theme 1: Belonging Within the AA/Black Community

Two participants reported feelings of belonging when around AA/Black individuals. Based on the participants' responses, there was an undeniable connection between AA/Black people, peers and professors alike, in the academic environment, probably because of the low

levels of representation. This positive experiences the negative experiences that some participants associated with being the only Black person in class, and it encompasses other subthemes, such as belonging with AA/Black peers and belonging with AA/Black professors.

Belonging with AA/Black peers. Two participants reported a sense of belonging with AA/Black peers, and one participant reported some validating experiences from White faculty members. Participants reported that such interactions were limited but that they thoroughly enjoyed those moments of connection.

Jane, when discussing challenges that she experienced when trying to establish faculty-student mentoring relationships, expressed hope for a future that was tied to relationships that she had established with her peers. She stated,

> But the one thing I can say that I'll always hold onto at [the university is] the handful of relationships that I've had that haven't been temperamental. And that's been the handful of Black doctoral students that are in the program and maybe one or two of our noncolored peers who still to this day reach out and are genuine and care. Yeah. Yeah. In fact, you being, a part of my life at [this school] has been a source of inspiration, to be honest with you, because since I met you I [have] not met a lot of students of our color. So, you being in the program has always been a motivation for me to keep going. And I think of you being on that side of the world and being in Texas, and you work hard, you're very intelligent, … you love God, you have a good attitude, you're a great fighter, that has been pretty motivational. And I'm glad that you have [hung] in there … You have stayed on track. And you've been super supportive. It's like, even with checking in on me during pregnancy, or how is the husband, how are you adjusting, even after

pregnancy you've been supportive. And I remember our very first class together when you introduced yourself and you talked about [being a licensed professional counselor] and your military background, and everything that you were doing. At that point I was just so curious about the LPC and what you can do. And it's like I was thirsty for knowledge and you were the only person who has ever sat there and shared with me your journey to becoming an LPC, what led you to be an LPC, what you've done now that you're an LPC, and what you plan to do after this degree with the license of an LPC. And that for me was like, okay, so I can do more than just go in private practice. Somebody finally has explained to me that this contributes to being visible. This is what you need in order to be visible. You're not good enough being Black with a higher degree. This goes to our visibility, our having a voice, [our] having a say-so. And it sucks that that's the way America is, but hearing that from somebody who's Black and has been successful, it's like, male or female regardless... Somebody is starting to pave the way. And for me, you were that one person because you were the first person that cared enough to sit me down and meet me where I was, in a classroom during a break, and just keep it real. Yeah, I talked to my husband and I [told] him, "My brother Steven and I, and my brother Daniel, we went out to this restaurant and I just can't wait for him to come back from Texas so we can go back. Because that's all we do is we eat, we talk, we laugh." Life just seems so [much] more relaxed. It's just like all of our troubles just pause whenever we get together.

Paulette, discussing her own experiences as an AA/Black doctoral student, stated,

I see that we work hard, that we are determined, that we have … varying

motivational factors, but they all are strong enough to keep us moving forward

and pressing forward. I think that we tend to cling to each other and find

community in one another, which I love. And I think that helps with how we see,

how we experience the program. So even though it's not representative of the

program, that community that we feel … still helps our experience when and if

we are able to find community. It's kind of like a Catch-22. It's beautiful that we

find community, but it's also frustrating that we have to find community in order

to feel safe and accepted, but that's our reality and that's just what we do. But

everybody doesn't have that option, though. So I was fortunate enough to be in a

class where there was another Black woman, one other Black woman. And I was

fortunate enough to be in a doctoral class with a Black woman and a Black man—

two Black men, actually. One was younger, one was older. That['s] not

necessarily typical, and so I recognize that I was blessed to have that opportunity,

and I also recognize that that may not be the story for other people, other Black

people in that program.

…I mean, it can be lonely to not have anybody like you in a space because

then you have to find another way to connect, which is not a bad thing, but as

humans we want to see how we connect … [I]t feels a little bit more forced when

you have to find a different way to connect with people.

Saeed had a somewhat different perspective. When discussing his own lived experiences

as an AA/Black CES doctoral student, he said that although he did not have interactions with

AA/Black doctoral students in the program, he had identified some faculty members who had offered assurance and validation, even though the relationships were not faculty-student mentoring relationships per se. Saeed stated,

> In fact, let me say this positively. Almost, not almost, all of the faculty members have been a blessing to me personally. I never even knew I would come this far, but the encouragement, [the] support—"Saeed, you can do it." They're pointing me to things I need to do to better myself. All that from the faculty. I never even believed in myself. The faculty itself ... But as an institution, for a person of color, as a Black person, I think that the acceptance as a Black person is still an issue. But then, on the other hand, for example, I have a friend, a staff member. I don't know whether to call it a mentorship, [he] and I talk maybe once every three or six months. It's not a mentorship, but it just happened to be like that. And it's very encouraging... In fact, he has been to [the country where I am from] before. He's just very, very, very good and encouraging. He also shares with me his struggles, because without that... That's a difference. I think that if we could have a faculty member as a mentor, and even if we can meet with them once a year, or twice a year for like one hour, that will be super. That will be super.

Belonging with AA/Black professors. Seven participants reported not having an AA/Black professor at all during their current graduate program; the remaining participant reported having only one AA/Black professor while enrolled in this program. When taking a course taught by an AA/Black professor, one participant, Jane, noted a connection with the professor, the classroom discussions, and the presentation of materials. She felt more in tune and better able to relate, both in class and out of class.

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Describing a faculty-student relationship with a Black professor, Jane reported,

> But … my last class, which was my dissertation internship, having a Black
> professor [who] was my faculty supervisor, but also co-teaching a course with the
> Black faculty, it was a totally different experience. But for me, … being a Black
> female, it made me feel like the elevator was brought down for women of color
> like me to have an opportunity to gain … more visibility in our profession and
> also at [this institution].

Jane's responses are unique because of her experience being enrolled in a course with an
AA/Black professor, which brought her a sense of comfort. She stated,

> Instead of being told, "I can't imagine what you've been feeling, but what I
> assume that you're feeling or what I assume this may be like for you..." Hearing
> that is different from someone saying, "I know how you feel; I've been there."

Theme 2: Coping

Another theme that emerged across the participants' responses was that of coping. Being
an AA/Black doctoral student in a predominantly White CES program caused uncomfortable
feelings for the participants. To protect themselves and to mediate negative feelings, the
participants engaged in coping strategies that are common for this population (Vassilliere,
Holahan, & Holahan, 2016). Vassilliere et al. (2016) reported that coping strategies are often
categorized in two ways: strategies used to regulate emotional distress, and strategies used to
confront the problem. Only one of the two approaches was recognized in the participants'
responses—regulating emotional stress. The subthemes presented in the theme of coping are (a)
regulating emotional distress and (b) creating a network of social support outside the classroom.

Regulating emotional distress. Studies suggest that there are harmful effects of racial discrimination on the mental health of AA/Black college students (Polanco-Roman, Danies, & Anglin, 2016). Polanco-Roman et al. (2016) posited that rumination and avoidance are passive coping strategies typically employed by AA/Black college students in response to race-related stress. Interview responses in the present study showed that some participants were using avoidance as a coping strategy. Whether they used it knowingly or unknowingly, it was beneficial for their daily interactions and overall success. Participants also used emotional suppression and masking: Emotional suppression was evident in the participants' responses and recounted experiences. As noted earlier, some participants did not feel safe or comfortable expressing themselves and sharing their thoughts in the classroom setting or with the White professors. Participants chose to continue with the graduate program in spite of this problem in order to achieve the ultimate goal of graduation.

Participants reported hiding how they truly felt in alarming, painful situations. Paulette, responding to the interview question about the role she or a faculty member played in establishing a faculty-student mentoring relationship, stated:

> That's a loaded question for me. If there was a culture of mentorship, then I
> would say that it would behoove the student to initiate that relationship. But if
> there is not a culture, then it almost should be top down, initiated from the
> department or faculty and put … out there for the students. Many … times there
> was this level of intimidation to speak personally to a professor, because that's not
> the relationship that you have. It's much like a peer in the sense that we're
> working in the field and much like a power dynamic where our relationship is
> predicated on a core-dependent or a grade-dependent relationship. So how much

do I share that [won't] make you feel like I'm incompetent, I'm incapable, I can't manage, right?

So no, I'm not going to go up to you and say, well, here are my struggles this week that [are] keeping me from completing [my work]. And if I'm just [going] to share a little bit, I have had a conversation where I disclose[d] what was happening. And one of the responses was, "Well, maybe you should drop the course and think about taking it another time." While it was delivered in love to me, it was not what I wanted to hear. I merely shared the human part of it … and I wasn't looking for you to say anything. Okay. I hear you. Sure. Maybe, but to say, I have to drop a 16-week course because I had [a] one-week difficulty sounds unreasonable to me.

Paulette's response was as follows (i.e., about the challenges that she experienced in trying to establish faculty-student mentoring relationships):

I haven't had a lot of challenges because I haven't reached out. And … the [one time] I did reach out, it was very hesitant. I was told clearly [by the instructor] that this is not something I really do and I'm willing to give it a shot, but it's a trial to see how this works. I was told, "I don't provide mentorship. That's not what I do." So that was the one time. And then that instructor came back and was like, "Well, how about this?" And he gave me an opportunity to do some work. And I guess the understanding [was] that that would have sufficed and it was a great opportunity. I would not have gotten it without that consideration, but it wasn't ongoing. And I understand it. It's the gender dynamic. It's the racial dynamic. It's the student and all of that, yeah, sure. I get all of it. But if we're

professionals, I think those components ought to be secondary, not ignored, but secondary in terms of where we were in context of what I asked for and was it feasible? And the answer was, that's not what I do.

Jane also expressed how she felt after making an attempt to establish a relationship with a faculty member:

And sometimes I felt that the responses I got from faculty were because they were obligated to say something or because there was a paper trail through e-mail. And it's, well, let me appear to be culturally sensitive or attune[d] to this issue because it's written. Whereas... I felt like I was more of a number ... than a person. And I feel like faculty could have done more to change how I felt... because I did my part by voicing the issues, reaching out, and wanting to have relationships. And the kind of relationships I had was, we have a relationship, we do [supervision], and you check in with me because it's part of the semester, but after the semester is over or after the course is over and you're no longer my instructor, even if I reach out just to say, "Hey, how are you?" Or, "Happy holidays," there's no response. And so, it just appears that you just checked off the box and you were caring about me because you were obligated to in that semester, but when that 17 weeks hit it's like you didn't care about me as a person. And it felt bad because … I was in class with a White colleague, [and a professor] friended this colleague on Facebook and neither one of us has graduated. And you tell me that you can't talk to me outside of class because it's a professional ethical thing, but you're on Facebook tagging this person on Facebook and hanging out and having coffee. And we're both students, we both have the same anticipated graduation date, it's

kind of like, why do you think students of color feel invisible? Situations like that

make it look like it's a Black and White thing.

Discussing how she felt when trying to find a [committee] chair, Jane stated,

Even with trying to find a chair, it was just reading through the faculty lists of our

programs, seeing what their interests were, and even after I secured a chair it was,

why not reach out and say hey, introduce yourself. Maybe see if someone would

like to collaborate on a presentation or something in the conference. I've had

some professors that have responded, some professors who left an e-mail because

of an e-mail receipt I saw and never followed up. I've had experiences where, like

I explained earlier, where I was told, "It's okay to have a relationship and have

supervision for a class, but as far as ongoing development, that's not appropriate

because we're not equal. You're a student and I'm a professor, so maybe when

you finish your dissertation and you become core faculty [as I am], then there's

room for us to have a professional relationship." And that's the way it was

worded. That's how it was said to me. And that kind of made me... It just put a

bad taste in my mouth and it's like, I have to suck this up because this is the

faculty that I'm assigned to work with for this semester. And the particular

semester that happened was the semester that I was pregnant and going through a

lot of issues and changes, and I'm just like, "This isn't what I need right now."

And the only time you reach out to me, even when the doctor took me out of work

because I was hospitalized twice, it was like, "Hey, not sure how you're feeling,

but I'm kind of in a crunch. I need you to grade these papers by Wednesday, is

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that a problem?" And I'm like, "Okay, so what about a 'Hey, how are you? How are things going? Have you been released home?'" None of that, it was just, this [is] what I need and you're my intern, so, you're going to do it? I thought it was so insensitive. But then it's just, being a Black woman, being a student, knowing about gatekeeping, I didn't challenge it. And it bothered me because I felt silenced. I felt that I couldn't speak up about how I felt because if I ruffled the wrong feathers that I would be pulled from the internship and I would be reprimanded, my graduation would be hindered. And so it's, I've had too many unfavorable outcomes when I've tried to have genuine professional relationships. Because for me it's everybody that I'm in class with, just about, maybe one or two people who aren't, and every faculty member I've met is like that.

Creating a network of social support outside the classroom. The second subtheme presented under coping was creating a network of social support outside the classroom. As earlier reported, Jane stated,

But the one thing I can say that I'll always hold onto at [this institution] are the handful of relationships that I've had that haven't been temperamental. And that's been the handful of Black doctoral students that are in the program and maybe one or two of our noncolored peers who still to this day reach out and are genuine and care.

Theme 3: Social Support from Faculty and Peers

According to Perepiczka, Chandler, and Becerra (2011), social support acts as a buffer to dysfunctional thoughts or attitudes. Cohen and Wills (1985) investigated the process through which social support has a beneficial effect on well-being. The buffering

model maintains that support is related to well-being primarily for persons under stress. Some participants reported a high level of social support, which suggests that they perceived social support from faculty and peers as an influential factor in their lives. Responding to the question about trying to establish mentoring relationships, Jane stated,

> But the one thing I can say that I'll always hold onto at this institution are the handful of relationships that I've had that haven't been temperamental. And that's been the handful of Black doctoral students that are in the program and maybe one or two of our noncolored peers who still to this day reach out and are genuine and care.

When asked why she thought African Americans/Black CES students persist to doctoral degree completion, Olga stated,

> I think the program is not void of mentorship. I think every time I receive feedback from my paper, every time the professor says, "Hey, revise this and get it back to me," I think that is a form of mentorship. So I don't want to make it seem like it was absolutely absent and I did not get it. I was encouraged in lots of ways. However, the ability to step outside of that singular lane was not there for me and my solo experience. That's what I want to add.

Saeed's response to the question about mentoring at a distance, through technology, reported,

> I think it's so possible. I think we can have a long-distance mentorship, given all the technology available and how they can afford us with the possibility of maintaining relationship. As a matter of fact, I personally, I still do have a student

mentor in the CES program. And my mentor and I haven't even met face to face.

We do everything on Zoom or on one of [those] mediums. I do think that it

doesn't matter. What matters is the understanding that the mentor has and the

mentee about the relationship. Because ... everything is possible now through

technology.

When asked what the outcomes might be when mentoring relationships do not exist,
Saeed stated,

That is horrible because, for example, I met with my mentor on several occasions,

and he helped me understand how to categorize my research thesis. When you

pull up articles, you have 300 articles for this program, for this other program,

how do you even organize [yourself] on the laptop, on a computer? How do you,

organize as you move ahead? If there was no mentorship, I would struggle more

… [I] would be slower. But with mentorship, my [inaudible 00:11:01] is faster

and I make [fewer] mistakes. Every single time I meet my mentor, thank you, my

fears have [been] lowered or reduced drastically because he speaks into me. And

then he also shares with me some of his struggles ... And I'm telling you, I don't

know about you by being an African, when a Caucasian is telling me he also

struggles, I say, "Really? Wow!" It makes me experience universality that I am

not alone. And that alone gives me some assurance that what I'm experiencing is

normal. It helps to normalize these struggles I deal with … and my mentor is a

student.

When responding to the question about his faculty-student mentoring-relationship
experiences, Saeed stated,

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But then on the other hand, for example, I have a friend, a staff member. I don't know whether to call it a mentorship. One of the professors, he and I talk maybe once every three or six months. It's not a mentorship, but it just happened to be like that. And it's very encouraging ... In fact, he has been to [foreign country] before. He's just very, very, very good and encouraging. He also shares with me his struggles, because without that ... That's a difference. I think that if we could have a faculty member as a mentor, and even if we can meet with [him or her] once a year, or twice a year for like one hour, that will be super. That will be super.

Asked about some of the experiences that AA/B doctoral students have had in the program, Saeed responded,

In fact, let me say this positively. Almost, not almost, all of the faculty members have been a blessing to me personally. I never even knew I would come this far, but the encouragement, [the] support—"Saeed, you can do it." They're pointing me to things I need to do to better myself. All that from the faculty. I never even believed in myself. The faculty itself ... But as an institution, for a person of color, as a Black person, I think that the acceptance as a Black person is still an issue.

Finally, to the question about why AA/B doctoral students persist to doctoral degree completion, Saeed's response was,

Wow. I think that what has helped me along the journey is the encouragement I received from both the faculty as well as students. The kind of friendship I have built, and the mentorship. Let me give an example…. I like research, but I don't like research. Okay? Last year I was in this research class with […], and during

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break time, […] came to me and he said, "[…], so do you understand what he's teaching?" Then he said, "[…] I don't." And I said, "[…], but you're a White guy." This is […]. He said, "[…], forget it." I don't understand. I said, "[…], I'm not from here. I am not from here." We laughed, and laughed, and laughed. But the point is, things like that help me to keep on keeping on. Because from my experience in my country, in […], the notion is that a Caucasian knows much more than you, an African. If a Caucasian comes to me in a PhD program and he's asking me if I understand something, because he doesn't get it, then I'm telling myself, "Really? Wow." This thing is like, whether you're Black or White, it doesn't matter. Everybody [has] similar challenges. That's the connection that I have made [through] friendship-colleagues feedback. It's [a] very powerful factor that has helped me. And then my own mentor. There are so many times I have called him, and I told him, "This is very hard." Especially the qualifying exams. Every time I talked to him, I mentioned … the qualifying exams. He said, "[…], you got it." I said, I don't. He said, "[…], you got it." … He would give me the encouragement ... That is why for me, I think mentorship is like 70% of why I'm still in the program. I can tell you that. Now if there were Black people mentors, oh my goodness, that would even be much better. That would … be so powerful, be so encouraging. Mentoring colleagues and the staff have all contributed to helping me … keep on.

George, responding to the question about what faculty-student mentorships meant to him personally, stated,

So, when I was in the program, I had a mentor that I always ran my—not day-to-

day, but some of my goals by—and then we talked about it. And I think it had a

huge impact on my own life, because eventually I was able to achieve my goals

even though I didn't complete the program. But eventually I was happy to be able

to plug myself into some of the areas that improved my life. Also, I think for me

most of the professors out there are very approachable, and that's very important

for any student.

Asked about his experiences trying to establish faculty mentoring relationships in the program, George reported, "I had a very good experience with all my professors.…Even the one [who] was hard on me, [that was] for a reason and it improved a lot of things in my life."

George's final response was to the question about the experiences of AA/B doctoral students. He stated,

Every professor there during my time [was] very open-minded. They don't treat

you based on your race; they treat you [as] an individual, and as a student that's

the truth. But in fact, all the people I have been talking about … are Caucasian,

and I'm grateful for that. So also, [of] every one of us in that program, I don't

think there's anybody that complained about being marginalized.

Shelby in her response to the question related to what her own experiences had been in her attempt to establish mentoring relationship stated, "I mean, I have an advisor and she's good. Every once in a while, I would send her a message or something."

Theme 4: Racism

Racial discrimination refers to "actions or practices carried out by members of dominant racial or ethnic groups that have a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups" (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980, pp. 1–2). Speight (2007) asserts that similar to other forms of oppression, racial discrimination is dynamic and complex, manifesting at interpersonal, structural, and cultural levels. In recent years, racial discrimination has become much more socially unacceptable for Americans to be overtly racist or discriminatory; therefore, many individuals believe that they are not racist and suggest that racial discrimination no longer exists (Sue, 2010). In spite of this belief, Gaertner and Dovidio (2006) purported that while most people do not consider themselves to be racist nor engage in hate crimes or openly engage in racist activities, they may still hold racial biases and participate in subtle and unconscious racially motivated behaviors. Helm (2013) posits that the history of race and racial attitudes continues to influence the educational experience of students of color. This general theme incorporates two subthemes: overcoming influential personal trauma and normalizing White spaces.

Overcoming influential personal trauma. Feagin (2015) postulated that in order to understand the prevalence of institutional racism, it is vital to understand the intensities and complexities of historical racial discrimination. According to Feagin, racial disparities in America are prevalent today, and participants in the present study shared personal examples of their impact. Two participants reflected on prior experiences that affected them currently in their PWI academic setting. In describing her doctoral experience, Jane stated,

From fall 2016, when I took my first PhD class, to fall 2019, I felt like I had to

compete to be visible. I felt like doors had been opened and shortcuts had been

given to people based off of the color of their skin or being inclusive and looking

like the majority, or talking like the majority gave you an "in," and so I felt "out."

And even with my position as a [teaching assistant], it still was like, "Yeah, I'm a

TA, but I'm not good enough because my skin's darker." That's how I felt. And so

I isolated because of that. But I feel that if many students of color are feeling like

they're invisible, I feel that the university and the faculty have more of an

important role than the student does... to find some kind of way to bridge that [and]

connect because that disconnect contributes to persistence, retention, involvement.

I mean, instead of just checking the box to say I've finished this program, I'm just

another number, if faculty worked hard to try to introduce students of color to

faculty of color rather than just their background or research interests, I know for

me I would have felt more support through this program.

In response to the question related to her doctoral experience, Paulette reported,

I did experience racism, but it wasn't from faculty. It was from students, other

PhD[s], White students. And I did experience oversexualization. I was assumed to

like, or be interested [in,] or to be hitting on a White male. He was married. He

was in a course. And he contacted me to apologize for something that he thought

that he did. If I'm to be honest, he was a jerk to me, but understand the language.

He said that he thought that he did. So he was just doing it because of feedback

from somebody [that] said that, you know you are really, the word was a "hellhole

toward her," was his language. And he said, "I don't see it, but if by chance I

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offended you, I'm sorry." And I responded in kind, etc. And then he called me again to check in to see how I'm doing. And he called me again. And we just talked. I said, "Hey, if you know me, [I try to show] love to everybody because what else are we going to do except encourage each other." I'm thinking we're all along the same path. And he e-mailed me and said, "Hey." And he e-mailed me with the [school] e-mail account, which was abnormal because I've never communicated with the system when I'm outside of school, outside of class on this. He initiated conversation and it was done via text. So I was shocked to get an e-mail that said, "Hey, I'm married and this [is] inappropriate behavior." And [that] he will stop communicating with me. And I was so flabbergasted that I screenshot and … archived all our text messages just to save it in the event that something else was coming down the pipeline. But it made me scared about my PhD career, because here I am a Black student with a White male saying that I'm coming on to him. And that absolutely was not the case, but this person's personality was jerky, but will they believe me? Or will they believe this White man? So yeah.

This happened about midway of my career. And I've never told anybody about it professionally outside of this interview. I did have a hard time with this. I did speak to my confidante and my therapist about it because I felt like I was under attack. And because of the racial disparity, what will then happen? …. He was a jerk to me in class. I didn't even think about it. I shook it off. But then to have him come back these several times, and then the e-mail, I was like, wait, is

somebody out to get me? What's going on? So it really caused a lot of anxiety throughout that period.

Saeed, responding to the question about his perceived doctoral experience, stated,

> To be frank with you, if I were to tell you the truth, racism still exists. Brother, that's the fact. And more can be done to bring about equality. There's tension in the atmosphere and as a foreigner, as a Black person, the feeling of not [being] completely accepted in the institution... For the program, I can tell you that all the faculty members, the professors are very welcoming regardless of your background. In fact, let me say this positively. They're pointing me to things I need to do to better myself. All that from the faculty. I never even believed in myself. The faculty itself... But as an institution, for a person of color, as a Black person, I think that the acceptance as a Black person is still an issue.

Normalizing White spaces. All participants have spent the entirety of their collegiate careers in PWIs. Six participants described being able to adapt to this environment, which they perceived as unwelcoming. Jane stated that she had become accustomed over time to the challenges that a PWI environment presents and that she had altered the way she interacts with faculty. Discussing the challenges encountered by an AA/Black doctoral student in trying to establish a faculty-student mentoring relationship, Jane reported the "bad taste" left in her mouth when a faculty member put off her request for ongoing development: "You're a student and I'm a professor … Maybe when you finish your dissertation and you become core faculty … there's room for us to have a professional relationship."

Theme 5: Multiculturalism

Professional counselors are required to develop, maintain, and practice multicultural competencies to work effectively with diverse populations (Clark, Moe, & Hays, 2017). According to Ivers, Johnson, Clarke, Newsome, and Berry (2016), the concept of multicultural counselor competency includes knowledge, awareness, and skills that counselors must develop as a prerequisite for providing services to individuals outside of the culture the counselor comes from. Because of the focus of this research study (i.e., AA/Black doctoral students studying to pursue careers within the helping fields), the participants noted the importance of cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. The subthemes within the multiculturalism theme are (a) experiencing a cultural disconnect with White professors and peers and (b) internalizing cultural competence. These two subthemes are addressed below.

Experiencing a cultural disconnect with White professors and peers. When asked about the general experiences of AA/Black CES doctoral students, Lilian's responses indicated a disconnect in culture. When describing interactions with White professors and peers, Lilian reported,

> So I think sometimes it could also look like limited allies, within your cohort. So
> in my cohort now, there [are] six of us that [are] doing this together. One of my
> classmates is Black and that's pretty much the one I talk to all of the time. Now I
> do talk to the other ones, but when I'm talking about racial microaggressions or
> I'm talking about certain experiences that I have, I feel like she's more relatable.
> So I think that sometimes your close colleagues … can be limited or impacted.

When Lilian was asked to describe the kind of responses she received from White professors and White peers about racial microaggressions, she stated:

Well, so in my experience, and it's not necessarily that I was expecting it, but this is just what happened, is that they don't understand. I mean, they're not mean, but they're just like, "Oh, this is an interesting topic." Or they don't really give feedback on it or they're like, "This is sad. I don't think people should have to deal with it." It's just for some reason … I mean, even one of the faculty members was like, "Who was doing this?" I'm like, "I'm sitting here presenting you with all of this literature, letting you know that this happens, and you're still asking me who's doing it. You're doing it." I didn't say that, but it's the truth. I'm like, "You're doing it." That is my experience, is that the people in my cohort, aside from my Black colleague and even my professors, they don't really understand what racial microaggressions are. They just don't understand. I think that when you don't fully understand, that limits your ability to really have a vision or help me get my dissertation to what it needs to be. Right? So they can comment on technical writing style, they can comment on measures and validity and all of those things, but they can't really comment on the content. They don't even know. They're like, "What is a racial micro..." So one of the things that makes ... racial microaggressions so powerful is this sense of invisibility, right? It's like you know when someone says something to you out of the way, but you['re] kind of like, "What? Did they just say that or am I tripping?" Kind of like that. So the girl was like, "Well, if [microaggressions are] hard to understand, how are you going to measure?" I'm like, "We're not saying that they're invisible, that people don't

know that they happen. We're saying that we know that they happen, but sometimes it's hard to say Steven said these things and this was rooted in racism. So that'll be the feedback that I'm getting." So I can't fully be supported because I'm too busy trying to explain what it is. I originally wanted to study John Henryism and I had to continue to ... I had to deal with them [continually] trying to change it. "Well, why don't we just talk about hardiness? So why don't we just talk about resiliency?" I'm like, "No, why can't we talk about John Henryism? I don't understand. Like, "Oh, well, it's just the same as this," and I'm like, "But it's not. Because if it was just the same as that, then it would be named the same." I had to...one, I had [to] process it, but I had to make a conscious decision to drop it and let it go altogether because I was tired of defending why I wanted to study that construct. I think, I can't prove it, but if I [had] had something that was more like resiliency, hardiness, or something like that that wasn't racially charged, which I don't think is racially charged, or if it was something that was more familiar to them, I don't think I would have had to defend my topic that much. When I changed it to racial microaggressions, they don't understand, but for some reason they're more accepting to that … Like, yes, they are connected to the CES community, but they're disconnected from the Black CES community. So then that's going to inform or limit their advice and their guidance.

Internalizing cultural competence. When participants were asked about how they perceived their doctoral experience, Lilian demonstrated cultural competency. She expressed and demonstrated cultural competency through examples of being able to connect with diverse individuals by increased awareness and sensitivity to the differences of others. The underlying

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tone in Lilian's response was a sense of pride in being able to connect and communicate with individuals from backgrounds different from her own.

Lilian stated,

I perceive it as beautifully chaotic, and I'll break that down. In some ways I perceive it as a privilege, because I realize that not [a lot] of Black people, let alone people in our profession, would be in my position to even have an experience as a Black CES student. I really do believe that it is going to propel me and help me be the leader in the field that's going to be able to impact change, and really be the faculty member and the supervisor that we're talking about as missing … [B]ut on the other side is that chaos of being ... I mean, stresses that come with being a minority. When there's not a lot of you, your sense of community is a little bit smaller and sometimes you have to fight for things that you really shouldn't have to fight for. Or sometimes you have to bite your tongue or change something that you know is dear to you, but you have to change it just for the sake of getting through. At some point it can just feel like survival. [At] some point it can feel like this is what I have to do in order to get the degree. That's where I think that chaotic piece comes from, of navigating the stressors of me being Black, but then also navigating the stresses of me being a PhD student. Right? Because [inaudible 00:29:02] a privilege to be here as well.

Theme 6: Invisibility

Unseen…unknown…just a number…not understood. According to participants, the feelings of isolation were so strong that some participants described it as feeling invisible in the dominant White culture. Invisibility of the AA/B students on campus and how they reacted to it

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was important. Not being noticed, not seeing themselves, and having others not understand who they were, all played a role in how they perceived their lived experiences.

Unseen. Jane reported,

From fall 2016, when I took my first PhD class, to fall 2019, I felt like I had to compete to be visible. And even with my position as a TA, it still was like, "Yeah I'm a TA, but I'm not good enough because my skin's darker." And sometimes I felt that the responses I got from faculty were because they were obligated to say something or because there was a paper trail through e-mail. And it's well, let me appear to be culturally sensitive or attuned to this issue because it's written. Whereas it's like, I felt more... I felt like I was more of a number.

Unknown. Paulette stated, "This is everybody else's program, but I don't have anybody that I'm connected to, so I'm just here and I don't really belong."

Not understood. Lilian reported her experiences as an AA/B student interacting with White professors and peers. As noted previously, she stated,

Well, so in my experience, and it's not necessarily that I was expecting it, but this is just what happened, is that they don't understand. I mean, they're not mean, but they're just like, "Oh, this is an interesting topic." Or they don't really give feedback on it or they're like, "This is sad. I don't think people should have to deal with it." It's just for some reason ... I mean, even one of the faculty members was like, "Who was doing this?" I'm like, "I'm sitting here presenting you with all of this literature, letting you know that this happens, and you're still asking me who's doing it. You're doing it."

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Summary

In Chapter 4, the data were analyzed according to the data-analysis steps detailed in Chapter 3. I used Marshall and Rossman's (2014) method of data analysis—a proven method of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a qualitative case study. Marshall and Rossman suggested that analysis should start early in the research process. It should continue as the research progresses so that the researcher can adjust observation strategies to suit the research topic and so he can exercise control over emerging ideas by testing them as they materialize.

The qualitative interviews with seven AA/Black doctoral students enrolled in a CACREP-accredited CES program were conducted utilizing a semistructured interview protocol. The protocol allowed me to obtain the data necessary to conduct an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon. Participants' voices were included by my creating and analyzing verbatim transcriptions of their experiences. As a result of the data-analysis process, five themes were reported. The themes of my research attempted to capture the essence of what it is to be an AA/Black doctoral student enrolled in a PWI's CES program. The participants' responses generated the themes of belonging within the Black community, coping, racism, multiculturalism, and invisibility.

In Chapter 5, a summary of the study's findings will be provided, along with discussion, implications, limitations, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter includes an overview of the study and a review of the research question, the theoretical framework, the methodology, and the study results. In this phenomenological qualitative study, I explored the lived experiences of AA/Black doctoral CES students in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships. The chapter also includes discussion, implications, limitations, recommendations for further study or actions, and conclusions. A discussion of the participants' experiences and findings is included to promote awareness and a greater understanding concerning lived experiences of AA/Black doctoral students enrolled in CES programs.

Overview

Melius (2011) asserted that obtaining a college degree is an academic milestone. Earning a doctoral degree, then, is a monumental academic accomplishment. Historically, the oppression of Black Americans compromised their basic rights, which included the right to education. Such rights were either banned, withheld, or underfunded (Diouf, 2001; Somervill, 2010; Wilson & Ferris, 1989). Ewing, Richardson, James-Myers, and Russell (1996) stated that in 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was signed and in 1865, enslaved Black Americans were freed. After the emancipation, some previously enslaved Americans of color started pursuing higher education (Beeks & Graves, 2017). Nevertheless, immediately after slavery was ended, segregation was reestablished and enforced through the Jim Crow laws (Bayor, 2003; Urofsky, 2012; Wilson & Ferris, 1989), which legally separated Black Americans from White Americans. Segregation within the educational systems further generated negative emotional and psychological effects in AA/Black students (Foley, 2010; Somervill, 2010). In May 1954, the Supreme Court made a significant ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*—the unanimous

decision that terminated segregation (Cashin, 2004). After that, AA/Black students were legally

allowed to attend institutions that formerly had only admitted Whites. According to Ewing et al.

(1996) and Feagin (2015), these institutions, described in this research study as PWIs, are

microcosms of the racially and socially oppressive nature of society. Greer (2008) and Tuitt

(2012) suggested that PWIs typically lack a racially inclusive educational environment;

AA/Black students have reported higher levels of race-related stressors and depressing campus

climates (Cokley, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013; McClain et al., 2016). Consequently,

AA/Black students' degree-completion rates have been lower than their White peers' (Lee &

Barnes, 2015; Lige, Peteet, & Brown, 2017). The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* has

suggested that although recently AA/Black graduate-student enrollment has shown a steady rise

(*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2018), retention rates have been found to be lower than

those of AA/Black undergraduate students (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles,

2008).

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the lived

experiences of AA/Black doctoral CES students. I did an extensive review of the peer-reviewed

literature (presented in Chapter 2) to describe the historical underpinnings of segregation and

desegregation, particularly within the American education system. The research question

addressed was, what are the lived experiences of African American/Black doctoral CES students

in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships? I conducted eight individual,

semistructured interviews. Three participants were between 21 and 29 years of age, three

participants were between 30 and 39 years of age, and two participants were between 50 and 59

years of age. Six participants were female, and two were male. I used Marshall and Rossman's

(2014) method of data analysis to help me order, structure, and interpret participants' responses.

From their responses to the interview questions, five themes emerged. The five themes depicted the essence of the participants' experiences in their academic environment.

Discussion of Findings

There is little in the counseling literature regarding faculty-student mentoring relationships in relation to AA/Black CES doctoral students, so my goal was to address that gap. Haskins et al. (2013) conducted a study and found that AA/Black graduate counseling students enrolled in PWIs experienced (a) isolation as an AA/Black student, (b) tokenization as a Black student, (c) lack of inclusion of AA/Black counselor perspectives within course work, and (d) differences between support received by faculty of color and support received by White faculty (and access to support from people of color and White peers). Nevertheless, unlike Haskins et al.'s study, this study extracted its themes from semistructured individual interviews rather than focus-group interviews, which might have allowed for more depth of participant expression on the research topic. The themes that emerged addressed the research question just stated (i.e., what are the lived experiences of African American/Black doctoral CES students in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships?). Four major themes from the current study emerged: belonging within the Black community, coping, racism, and multiculturalism. Subthemes emerged within each major theme.

Discussion of Theme 1: Belonging Within the AA/Black Community

Williams, Brewley, Reed, White, and Davis-Haley (2005) suggested that connecting with someone in academia who is from a similar cultural background is comforting to AA/Black students. This assertion supports the theme of belonging within the Black community. This theme includes two subthemes: (a) belonging with AA/Black peers, and (b) belonging with AA/Black professors. One study postulated that Black college students might benefit from

interacting with other AA/Black students to develop a sense of belonging and help them to create a comfortable space to socialize (Guiffrida and Douthit, 2010). This study revealed that participants found comfort and acceptance when interacting with AA/Black peers and professors. Supporting the second subtheme, several studies have shown that faculty-student relationships can be influential in students' success and institution satisfaction (Beasley, Chapman-Hilliard, & McClain, 2016; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Hults, 1999).

Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) noted that AA/Black students' interactions with AA/Black faculty were positive and improved the experiences of AA/Black students. In the present study, Jane had an AA/Black professor in one CES doctoral course; the rest of the participants were able to recall at least one AA/Black professor from other collegiate experiences, and their responses indicated a strong connection with their AA/Black professors. Since the end of the Jim Crow era, enormous progress has been achieved for the AA/Black community. Because of the hard work of many individuals and groups of pioneers, Americans of color have been given significant and meaningful opportunities. This study may influence other AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs, AA/Black professional counselors, the AA/Black community in general, and other non-White communities.

Participant Saeed's reaction to this study was,

The examples that I'm gaining from this survey or this study, I believe that it will help ... This research will contribute to the counseling days, so that faculty members will know how to help foreigners for once, and it will help them put in place structures like mentorship. You come here from your country to do a PhD program, whom do you talk to? Whom do you ask questions? How would they

see you? You're thinking about all these things, because you don't know how

they will perceive you when you're sharing your struggles.

Amen (2011) and Taharka (2018) are examples of authors who have demonstrated what unity

means among Americans of color—a culture that thrives on community effort.

Discussion of Theme 2: Coping

Coping strategies are essential tools for AA/Black students in dealing with pandemic

racial discrimination and the distress of the higher-education environment, which can have

adverse effects on mental health (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). For example, racial

discrimination has been found to be directly associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety,

post-traumatic stress disorder, isolation, and identity confusion (Alexander-Snow, 2010; Greer,

2008; McClain et al., 2016; Polanco-Roman et al., 2016; Ross, Powell, & Henriksen, 2016;

Shahid, Nelson, & Cardemil, 2018). Participants in this study found multiple ways to cope with

feeling uncomfortable in a CES program at a PWI.

Regulating emotional distress. The first subtheme under the coping theme was

regulating one's emotions. Some participants reported that they forced themselves to manage and

balance their emotions when in a state of distress. Jane reported that she was pregnant and in

significant distress, and the White professor knew but did not seem to care; the professor just

wanted her to grade the papers and turn them in before the deadline. Some participants reported

that they often suppressed or masked painful emotions and that this compelled them to be in a

constant state of survival. For example, Jane reported as follows:

And it felt bad because … I was in class with a White colleague, … [and a

professor] friended this colleague on Facebook and neither one of us has

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graduated. And you tell me that you can't talk to me outside of class because it's a

professional ethical thing, but you're on Facebook tagging this person on

Facebook and hanging out and having coffee. And we're both students, we both

have the same anticipated graduation date, it's kind of like, why do you think

students of color feel invisible?

Shahid et al. (2018) found that AA/Black women who enrolled in PWIs coped with the

negatively racially charged environment through social support and less-active forms of

coping—including mental distraction, disengagement, and detachment. This is consistent with

the findings of the present study.

Creating a network of social support outside of the classroom. The second subtheme

involved finding outside support. Shahid et al. (2018) suggested that AA/Black culture employs

socialization as a coping mechanism. AA/Black doctoral CES students in this study found social

support through fellow AA/Black students and a few White peers; this served as critical coping

mechanism while dealing with painful "feelings of not [being] completely accepted in the

institution" and adjusting to PWIs' environmental stressors. Speaking on the subject of

disengagement from the larger campus community, Saeed stated,

To be frank with you, if I were to tell you the truth, racism still exists. Brother,

that's the fact. And more can be done to bring about equality. There's tension in

the atmosphere and as a foreigner, as a Black person, the feeling of not [being]

completely accepted in the institution.... But as an institution, for a person of

color, as a Black person, I think that the acceptance as a Black person is still an

issue.

But then on the other hand, for example, I have a friend, a staff member. I don't know whether to call it a mentorship. One of the professors, him and I talk maybe once every three or six months. It's not a mentorship, but it just happened to be like that. And it's very encouraging ... In fact, he has been to [the country of my origin before]. He's just very, very, very good and encouraging. He also shares with me his struggles, because without that ... That's a difference. I think that if we could have a faculty member as a mentor, and even if we can meet with them once a year, or twice a year for like one hour, that will be super.

The participants reported a disconnect with the larger university community but found comfort in the support they created outside the classroom setting.

Discussion of Theme 3: Support

In this study, support from faculty and peers emerged as a theme, which is believed to have had both direct and effects psychological adjustment and buffering effects on the impact of the participants' life stressors. The open-ended questions revealed that Black professors and Black students were the primary support for the participants. However, there were other distinct categories of support. In order of consequence, the categories were: (1) Black students, (2) Black professors, (3) self-support, (4) family, and (5) faith/God (6) White professors and peers Evidence of direct effects of availability of support suggests a positive impact on the participants' adjustment but lack of support implies a source of stress. Olga responding to the question related to what the outcomes might be when faculty-study mentoring relationships do not exist stated,

I have persevered because I know that one of my instructors is depending on me to be a part of her success story. [B]ecause of that interaction, I said, you know what? I will not be one of the students that fail and I'm going to work really hard. I'm going to follow all of the ethics. I'm going to stick by all of our CACREP standards and I'm going to produce, because I felt like my contribution was part of a greater community that my instructor was a part of. So it played a huge role for me.

Olga further reported other sources of support by stating,

I think it's to change the narratives. I think it's a personal fulfillment for us. I've always believed God didn't put a dream in our hearts if He didn't want us to have it. But outside of that, it becomes bigger than us. It becomes the example of the family. Like I said earlier, not very many of us have the opportunity to be in this position of privilege going to anybody's university. And we literally have some family members kneel down so we can stand on their shoulders for us to reach this goal. So it's a big deal. And then [there's] the work that we can do to have saturation in the field, to have a full representation in the field. We are dynamic people; our story is [about] battle and resilience. However, people don't often share that or want to have that be our new norm. [The] majority of African-American people really just want to live healthy lives, where they don't feel like they're just surviving, but also thriving.

Theme 3 strongly suggests that social support acts as a buffer to dysfunctional thoughts or attitudes. This study has demonstrated that support had a beneficial effect on the well-being of the participants and served as a buffer for them when they were undergoing significant stress.

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Discussion of Theme 4: Racism

In this study, racism emerged as a theme, which of course aligns with the historical impact of racial issues and segregation in America. The racial theme incorporated two subthemes—overcoming personal trauma and normalizing White spaces.

Overcoming influential personal trauma. The term *personal trauma* captured participants' personal experiences with racism and its relevance to current experiences in their doctoral program. For example, Jane and another participant, Olga, shared stories depicting the impact of certain personal experiences. These participants' personal experiences illustrate the racial injustices that have plagued the United States throughout its history (Garcia & Sharif, 2015).

Normalizing White spaces. Prolonged exposure to chronic distress in PWIs seemingly contributed to the participants' resiliency and their ability to navigate their way around in these uncomfortable settings. This, in turn, supported the emergence of the second subtheme—normalizing White spaces. All participants reported that they had enrolled in a PWI earlier in their academic journeys for either undergraduate or graduate education, so they were already conditioned to conform within an uncomfortable academic environment. For example, when faced with less-than-desirable situations and feeling out of place, Jane stated,

> … I've had too many unfavorable outcomes when I've tried to have genuine professional relationships. Because for me it's everybody that I'm in class with, just about, maybe one or two people who aren't, and every faculty member I've met is like that.

This subtheme supports the idea that some racially biased PWI spaces have been normalized by Black students (Haynes, 2019).

Discussion of Theme 5: Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism emerged as a common theme from the participants' responses. The participants emphasized the importance of cultural knowledge and awareness and expressed certain expectations for multicultural competence from professors, themselves, and their peers. These expectations were rooted in the participants' decision to pursue education and a career in professional counseling. According to Brown and Dancy (2010), Eakins and Eakins (2017), and Hults (1999), PWIs were not created with AA/Black students' success in mind, and that is why they consistently fail to foster diversity on campus. The policies of these institutions are enforced by systemic societal ideals, which may inadvertently affect various colleges and departments on campus adversely (Eakins & Eakins, 2017)—including CES programs. The subthemes within the theme of multiculturalism are (a) experiencing a cultural disconnect with White professors and peers and (b) internalizing cultural competence.

Experiencing a cultural disconnect with White professors and peers. Participant responses reflected a perceived lack of cultural competency in White professors and peers. Lilian reported that she was discussing the topic of microaggressions in class, and to her surprise, her White professor and peers did not know what "microaggression" meant. Lilian, reacting to this experience, stated:

> One of my classmates is Black and that's pretty much the one I talk to all of the time. Now I do talk to the other ones, but when I'm talking about racial microaggressions or I'm talking about certain experiences that I have, I feel like [the Black classmate is] more relatable. So I think that sometimes your close

colleagues … can be limited or impacted. Well, … in my experience, and it's not

necessarily that I was expecting it, but this is just what happened, is that they

don't understand. I mean, they're not mean, but they're just like, "Oh, this is an

interesting topic." Or they don't really give feedback on it, or they're like, "This

is sad. I don't think people should have to deal with it." It's just for some reason

... I mean, even one of the faculty members was like, "Who was doing this?" I'm

like, "I'm sitting here presenting you with all of this literature, letting you know

that this happens, and you're still asking me who's doing it. You're doing it."

Eakins & Eakins (2017) argued that oppressive systematic matters that are embedded in

society and influence institutions must be deliberately challenged. Because of traditions and

historical underpinnings, intolerance and White privilege are embedded in the American culture.

Some participants reported that they were surprised by this revelation and surprised that their

expectations for their professors and peers' heightened cultural awareness were not met. All the

participants in this research study were previously enrolled in PWIs for their undergraduate and

graduate education, and they shared experiences about a cultural disconnect—experiences with

White peers as well as with White professors. According to Haskins et al. (2013), lack of

community within a campus culture is a major factor for AA/Black graduate students, and

although participants described interacting with White professors and peers, they expressed a

lack of connection with them on a cultural level. Some participants reported feeling that they

could not fully be themselves around their White professors and peers but typically were only

able to connect with them on an academic level, as opposed to a more personal or cultural level.

Research has suggested that AA/Black students are often unable to form strong

relationships with White faculty at PWIs (Payne & Suddler, 2014). In the area of race and

culture, the participants in the present study reported that they felt a lack of connection between themselves and their White professors. The general consensus was that participants felt that their White professors could not understand their racial viewpoints or their position in society or academia (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Haskins et al. (2013) postulated that AA/Black students at PWIs typically have less interaction with faculty members compared with AA/Black students at HBCUs. Consistent with Haskins et al.'s (2013) argument, the participants felt less connected and therefore forged less-authentic relationships with White professors. Most of the participants reported that they had made several attempts to make connections with White professors, but each time they received pushback.

Internalizing cultural competence. Participants emphasized awareness of their own culture and the cultures from which their professors and peers came. Each participant reported a high level of cultural awareness and demonstrated sensitivity to differences between themselves and others. The participants viewed their levels of cultural awareness as a strength and a necessity, as they considered themselves called as individuals to bring about change in the counseling field. Speaking on this subtheme, Lilian stated,

> I just feel like there's a lot for me to do that ... I've just got to suck it up. Right? I have to say I have a purpose and I think that my purpose is to be a catalyst, somebody that helps to bring about change. So I feel like … the higher that I go, and once I get that doctorate and I get "Doctor" in front of my name, that propels me even further to be that catalyst. Yes, I can use my voice now and I think people listen to me, but there's just something about being a part of that elite group that changes things.

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Diouf (2001) stated that because enslaved Africans were banned from formal education, they developed a keen sense of survival which included cultural awareness. Even though the overt oppression of Blacks in America has to some degree improved, their mindset is still influenced by their ancestors' mindset, and that mentality is still passed down from one generation to another (Eakins & Eakins, 2017).

Discussion of Theme 6: Invisibility

In addition to having to deal with the previously discussed themes, the AA/Black CES doctoral students experienced being and feeling invisible on campus and among White faculty and peers. The invisibility came in multiple forms. The participants described feeling invisible when both professors and peers and ignored them in the classroom and made them feel like they were invisible. Outside of the classroom, the invisibility was much more common and pervasive according to the data.

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Discussion in Context of Conceptual Frameworks

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Some participants reported that their efforts to develop faculty-student mentoring relationships turned out to be futile, even after several attempts. Participants reported they were not able to fully be themselves when in PWIs. They reported that existing in their daily lives with friends and family is natural, but that PWI environments evoke distress, anxiety, and hypervigilance. The descriptions of the participants' experiences mirror the double-consciousness notion described by Du Bois (2006):

> [A] peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an

American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two

warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being

torn asunder.

The conceptual framework of this study was guided by RCT. RCT (Lenz, 2016; Miller, 1976) is

a contemporary psychodynamic framework for understanding human development, and it is

based on the assumption that the happiness and well-being of AA/B doctoral CES students

depended on the degree to which they and the faculty participated in growth-fostering

relationships. I relied on this idea as I conducted research and interpreted the faculty-student

mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black CES doctoral students.

Implications

The themes of (a) belonging within the Black community, (b) coping, (c) racism, and (d)

multiculturalism are similar to Haskins et al.'s (2013) findings. Although Haskins et al.'s data

were gathered from focus groups, the findings were consistent with my findings from the

individual interviews conducted in this research study. The participants in this study did focus on

themselves and their personal lived experiences, in contrast to what is typical in a group setting;

this approach, though possibly beneficial for comfort, may have simplified participants'

responses. Implications discussed in Haskins et al.'s findings still seem to be relevant, such as

the need for personal change with faculty members and their approach to AA/Black students; the

same issues emerged in this research. Furthermore, the problems discussed here may persist

because of the level of institutional racism and the powerful impact it has on campus

communities (Eakins & Eakins, 2017; Karkouti, 2016).

Addressing 2016 CACREP-accreditation Standards

Counselor-education programs seeking CACREP accreditation must abide by and endorse prescribed standards. The 2016 CACREP standards encompass six sections: (a) the learning environment, (b) professional counseling identity, (c) professional practice, (d) evaluation of the program, (e) entry-level specialty areas, and (f) doctoral standards. The first section, the learning environment, has three components: (a) the institution, (b) the academic unit, and (c) the faculty and staff. Within the academic portion, 2016 CACREP standards require that counseling programs make "continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community" (p. 7). Furthermore, during admission procedures for program candidates, academic units are required to consider applicants' "respect for cultural differences" (CACREP, p. 7). Therefore, it is the responsibility of 2016 CACREP-accredited programs to attract and maintain a diverse group of students and follow protocols to assess admitted students' levels of commitment to honor and respect cultural differences. Furthermore, the 2016 CACREP standards require that faculty must have "relevant preparation and experience in relation to the courses they teach" (p. 8). However, these requirements do not include competency in multicultural standards. Current 2016 CACREP standards simply note that faculty have "the authority to determine program curricula and to establish operational policies and procedures for the program" (p. 8). Thus, professional identity could conceivably be established, according to CACREP, without faculty demonstrating multicultural competency. However, faculty members' multicultural competency regarding diversity is essential and may positively affect students' trust in the professors (Shen-Miller, Forrest, & Burt, 2012).

The CACREP (2016) Board provided standards in eight core areas for all entry-level counseling graduate students. The first core area covers standards that emphasize providing assistance to clients, which includes the process of advocacy needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede client access, equity, and success. However, this core area does not specifically address personal experiences related to various cultures, so there appears to be a gap in professional counseling orientation in regard to addressing the cultural barriers that may exist within an organization. Although the CACREP (2016) standards provided a mandate related to "strategies for personal and professional self-evaluation and implications for practice" (p. 11), there is no specific requirement for experience or practice. Counseling is a gatekeeping profession, so self-evaluation with respect to multicultural competency should be assessed during coursework and at a professional level, as well as during the admissions and hiring process of new faculty members and staff in counseling departments.

Diversity is clearly addressed in the second core area—social and cultural diversity—which requires "strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination" (p. 11). Excluding the second core area, all CACREP (2016) core areas include one identical statement each: "ethical and culturally relevant strategies for …" the named core area (pp. 21–37). The third core area of the 2016 CACREP standards includes professional practice, which encompasses practicums and internships. No mandate is provided for addressing diversity disparities—there are no cultural or ethical requirements. In a professional field that requires the fulfillment of mandatory supervision, practicums, and internships, it is startling that no mechanism is in place to ensure that diversity, inclusion, and equality are being practiced. To ensure that multicultural awareness and knowledge are developed and practiced, future additions to the CACREP standards should

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establish guidelines for counselor-education programs to encourage students and interns to seek culturally diverse practicum, internship, and supervision opportunities. CACREP should also add an advanced multicultural course as part of the training for future counselor educators. The American Psychological Association and clinical and counseling psychology programs have addressed multicultural competency, delivery, and interactions in internships for at least 25 years (Peters et al., 2011; Proctor & Rogers, 2013; Speight, Thomas, Kennel, & Anderson, 1995).

Recommendations for PWIs

The counseling faculty and hiring committees should consider the needs of current and future students. Participants' responses yielded an undeniable sense of isolation, consistent with Eakins and Eakins's (2017) research study. For example, the participants reported the desire for more representation in the faculty. This overwhelming desire for AA/Black faculty role models must not be ignored. On the basis of the results of this study, it is recommended that admissions and recruitment processes be evaluated to ensure inclusion and diversity are sought and implemented. Eakins and Eakins presented a recruitment plan for institutions to increase diversity in PWIs. Counselor-education departments also need to partner with the admissions department on their campus to implement a diversity plan for recruitment and retention (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). Eakins and Eakins also proposed a model called the Collaborative Style Cohort Recruitment Model, which was designed to create social-support programs that can assist AA/Black doctoral students facing increased stress levels in PWI settings.

Recommendations for Counselor-education Faculty

Creating awareness and knowledge toward multicultural competency is beneficial for counselor educators and counselors-in-training. Jane, who had a graduate class with an AA/Black professor, reported how encouraging the course was for her. She went on to explain

how she felt understood and comfortable sharing personal experiences in class. All participants described experiences with White professors in the CES program that were less than ideal, specifically reporting perceived microaggressions and feelings of disconnection. To change this perception, professors are encouraged to deliberately make it their goal to incorporate AA/Black doctoral students in counseling-course materials and literature. While there are studies that have focused on training students, few of these studies (or none) have focused on the faculty members who are tasked with the responsibility of training those students (Koch et al., 2018). Faculty members are encouraged to create a multicultural educational environment that provides students of color access to educational equality (Banks, 1993). Banks suggested five dimensions of multicultural education that could increase equality amid diversity. These dimensions are (a) content integration, (b) knowledge of the construction process, (c) prejudice reeducation, (d) equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure. The results of this study suggest that CES faculty members should continuously assess the classroom climate in an effort to create an environment, where all students feel safe and included.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on exploring White faculty members' perceptions of AA/Black doctoral CES students. Because all people carry inherent bias, future researchers may focus on identifying counselor educators' perceptions of AA/Black doctoral students. Counselors and counselor educators are trained and required to bracket their personal experiences in order to attend to clients and data with a fresh and unbiased approach. By employing a bracketing approach to teaching and interacting with students of color, faculty members may negate the common biases and microaggressions that the participants experienced in their PWIs.

This research may make a contribution to the counseling literature by starting a conversation about the need to train faculty members, using RCT, in faculty-student mentoring relationships with AA/Black students. This study may also encourage CES departments in PWIs to lead on the entire campus by providing ongoing training for faculty members, staff, and students on multiculturalism and by developing an action plan to ensure that the integration of people of color into the CES department and the larger campus community is realized. This study also reveals the need to continuously reevaluate CES programs to ensure that programs accredited under the 2016 CACREP standards strive to maintain a diverse group of students and follow protocols to assess admitted students' level of regard for cultural differences. This study also exposes a need for research addressing multicultural competency generally within the field of counseling and specifically with respect to internship experiences, in accordance with the CACREP 2016 standards.

Limitations

The participants were recruited from a regional university in the southern part of the United States, which may also limit transferability of results across geographical areas. However, even if the results are not transferable to all AA/Black doctoral CES students, they may be transferable to some of these students enrolled in PWIs in the region. Moreover, there was diversity among the participants in age, level of experience, and sex, and these differences could also have affected the data. An added limitation may be the participants' enrollment status at their universities. The participants were enrolled in the CES program, and they shared their experiences in that program. Because of their ongoing academic evaluations, they may not have been entirely forthcoming about all their experiences, to avoid potential negative repercussions from their statements. However, my similar cultural background (i.e., as an AA/ Black doctoral

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CES student) may have served as a comforting factor for the participants during the semistructured interviews.

Conclusion

The findings of the current research suggest that AA/Black doctoral CES students in the institution where the study was conducted on lived experienced race-related stressors on campus and in relationships with White faculty members and peers. These students have demonstrated resiliency, determination, and intelligence in their pursuit of their doctoral degrees. At this level of education and after prolonged exposure to a predominantly White academic collegiate setting, the participants expressed a long history of being careful in their behaviors, comments, and interactions.

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings related to lived experiences of AA/Black doctoral CES students. The findings suggested that there is much to be learned from how AA/Black doctoral CES students are affected while enrolled in PWIs. This study has provided important insight and understanding on the experiences of AA/Black doctoral students, whose voices deserve to be heard. The results of this study suggest that counselor education programs need more AA/Black core faculty members but that progress in this area appears to be hindered by unknown factors. It is my view that more research is needed this area.

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APPENDIX A

Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore and identify faculty-student mentoring-relationship experiences of AA/Black doctoral students in CES programs. The following research question was addressed: What are the lived experiences of African American/Black doctoral CES students in relation to faculty-student mentoring relationships? The study was reinforced by seven subquestions, which were used to guide the interviews. The questions for the interview guide were designed to get to the point of the inquiry while leaving room for questions that emerged from participant responses (Hatch, 2002). Hatch (2002) suggested that the researcher drive the initial direction of the planned questions but allow participant responses to direct the subsequent path.

Subquestions

1. What does faculty-student mentorship mean for you?

2. What does a mentoring relationship look like in academia?

3. What role does a faculty member or a student play in establishing a mentoring relationship?

4. What might a mentoring relationship look like at a distance, through technology?

5. What are some of the challenges that you have experienced in trying to establish faculty-student mentoring relationships?

6. What are the outcomes when these relationships are not available?

7. How will the knowledge gained from this study help the faculty, the students, and the

CES departments?

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Title of the Project: Faculty-student mentoring relationship experiences of African American/Black doctoral CES students
Principal Investigator: Steven O. Siaji, MA, LPC, School of Behavioral Sciences, Liberty University.

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years and above, and an African American/Black doctoral CES student or a former student. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and as questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore/identify personal lived experiences of African American/Black doctoral CES students related to faculty-student mentoring relationship.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following:
        Participate in a one-hour, in-depth interview involving 7 questions related to faculty-student mentoring relationship experiences in a CES doctoral program.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. The results may help improve faculty-student mentoring relationship experiences for both faculty and students in CES programs.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only

the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or will other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable will be removed before data is shared.

- Participants' responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interview will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

| **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?** |
Participants will not be compensated financially for participating in this study.

| **Is study participation voluntary?** |
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

| **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?** |
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

| **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?** |
The researcher conducting this study is Steven O. Siaji. You may ask any questions now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at (915) 238-0065 and ssiaji@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Melvin Pride at mpride2@liberty.edu.

| **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?** |
If you have any questions of 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. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

| **Your Consent** |
By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understand the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____   _____
Printed Subject Name   Signature & Date

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Letter

Dear Student:

As a graduate student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting a research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Counselor Education and Supervision. The purpose of my research is to explore lived experiences of African American/Black counselor education and supervision (CES) doctoral students, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and African American/Black CES doctoral students. Participants may include current CES doctoral students and those who graduated or dropped out of the program. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a recorded phone interview. It should take approximately one hour to complete the procedure listed. Your name and other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but it will be kept confidential.

A screening survey for determining eligibility is provided online. Please go online and type: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5BBR8JN on the search engine to complete the survey. After I determine your eligibility, I will contact you by email with the attached consent form. When you receive the email, you are welcome to open the consent form, save a copy to your computer, type your name and the date on the forms, save it again and return a signed copy to me by email at ssiaji@liberty.edu. When I receive a signed consent form from you, I will contact you by email to schedule a phone interview.

Sincerely,
Steven Siaji
CES, PhD Student
(915) 238-0065/ssiaji@liberty.edu

Survey Information

1. What is your age?
   o   17 or younger
   o   18–20
   o   21–29
   o   30–39
   o   40–49
   o   50–59
   o   60 or older

2. Do you identify as African American/Black?
   o   Yes
   o   No

3.   Are you enrolled in a CES doctoral program?
   o   Yes, full time.
   o   Yes, part time.
   o   No, I have graduated.
   o   No, I am not currently enrolled.
   o   No, I have graduated.
   o   No, I dropped out.

4. What is your gender
   o   Male
   o   Female
   o   Other

Survey link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZP9F8FB

APPENDIX E

Permission Letter

From: Moitinho, Elias S (Ctr for Counseling & Family Studies) <emoitinho2@liberty.edu>
Sent: Friday, April 17, 2020 8:13 AM
To: Pride, Melvin (Ctr for Counseling & Family Studies) <mpride2@liberty.edu>
Subject: RE: Permission for Steven Siaji to use Personnel from your Department

Hi Dr. Pride,

I give my permission to Steven Siaji to use personnel from the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies in his qualitative research for his PhD research study: Faculty-Student Mentoring Relationship Experiences of African American/Black CES Doctoral Students.

Sincerely,

Elias Moitinho, PhD, LPC-S, LPC, LMFT
Residential Department Chair
Professor of Counseling
Department of Counselor Education & Family Studies
School of Behavioral Sciences

(434) 592-4084

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
From: Pride, Melvin (Ctr for Counseling & Family Studies) <mpride2@liberty.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2020 9:42 PM
To: Moitinho, Elias S (Ctr for Counseling & Family Studies) <emoitinho2@liberty.edu>
Subject: Permission for Steven Siaji to use Personnel from your Department
Importance: High

Hello Elias,
I pray that all is well. Per the IRB, Steven needs written permission from you as Department Chair to use LU personnel from your department in his qualitative research for his PhD. The title of his research is:

Faculty-Student Mentoring Relationship Experiences of African American/Black CES Doctoral Students

Please advise if you need more information. Thanks for your help.

Melvin E. Pride, PhD, LPC, LCPC, NCC
Associate Professor
Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies

(434) 592-3901