THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN COUNSELOR

by

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Abstract

BRITTANY NICOLE GLOVER. "The Lived Experiences of Black Doctoral Students in CACREP Counselor Education Programs at Predominately White Institutions. (Under the direction of DR. TARYNE MINGO)

Black doctoral students represent 25.09% of doctoral students that are enrolled in a Council of Accreditation of Related and Educational Programs (CACREP) Counseling Program. The voices and experiences of Black doctoral students in counselor education programs have been collected and reported by researchers in regards to the various challenges they experience in their program. However, despite the continuous research, Black doctoral students continue reporting feelings of isolation, microaggressions, navigating white privilege and white fragility, and a host of other negative experiences within their counselor education programs. This study consisted of twelve participants that participated in semi-structured interviews regarding their experiences, feelings, and perspectives of how they felt their program was meeting CACREP standard 1:K which explains how programs should make continuous and systematic ways to attract, enroll, retain and create an inclusive learning environment for diverse students. In an effort to illuminate the voices of the participants and capture genuine responses in the findings, Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) was utilized as the theoretical framework and Critical Phenomenology was utilized as the methodology. From the data collected in this study, four themes emerged: Representation is Meaningful and Matters, White Faculty not Providing Safe Spaces, Disingenuous and Performative Programs, and Black Students Have Specific Needs. The findings aligned to existing research and provided a proposed solution for moving counselor education programs from awareness to action.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who "push through" in spite of adversity. I dedicate this dissertation to Black men and women in pursuit of their education, dreams, goals, and aspirations. I dedicate this to those who feel they don't have a voice, are ostracized, marginalized, and oppressed due to their Blackness. This dissertation is dedicated to Black culture. May the voices of the participants from this study be illuminated and may this dissertation create space for systemic change.

To Black & Brown children:

I SEE YOU, I HEAR YOU, I WILL ALWAYS FIGHT FOR YOU!

To My Grandmother, Uncle Henry, Aunt Coda, Aunt Helen, Aunt Joby, and Aunt GraceAnn:

Thank you for everything that you poured into me during your time on this Earth. Your spirit lives within me, forever.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Diversity is continuously growing in the United States and within higher-level education. According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2021), there were 1,391,580 graduate and professional students enrolled in a four-year public institution. This is a 5.6% increase (1,217,374 graduate and professional students) from the year 2020. The National Association of College and Employers (2021) reported that 53% of African Americans that are enrolled in college attend predominantly white institutions (PWIs). However, with over half of the African American college student population attending PWIs, African American students are still widely underrepresented at PWIs (Lawson, 2015). When considering doctoral degrees specifically, the National Science Foundation (2020) reported that there were 55, 283 doctoral degrees conferred. Of these 55, 283 doctoral degrees conferred, 2,458 (7.1%) were earned by Black students.

While this study explored the experiences of both men and women, it is important to mention how the data is disaggregated by gender. According to the National Science Foundation (2020), of the 2,458 Black students that earned a doctoral degree, 1,540 (62.3%) of those conferred doctoral degrees were earned by Black women. This gender gap shows that Black women are earning doctoral degrees at a higher rate than Black men and it can be assumed that they (Black women) are more successful at navigating their experiences at PWIs (Shavers & Moore, 2014). However, this notion is quite the contrary and studies have shown that both Black women and Black men face various obstacles and barriers while obtaining their doctoral degree (Shavers & Moore, 2014; Johnson & Scott, 2021).

Shavers and Moore (2014) posit that Black women are the most dissatisfied and feel the most isolated as students at PWIs in comparison to white women and Black men. Black women also report that they not only feel isolated, but they experience both racism and sexism in covert

and overt forms (Shavers & Moore, 2014). As for Black men, Johnson and Scott (2021) found that many Black men report their isolation being attributed to being an only or one of few Black men in their programs. In addition, the scarcity of finding Black male faculty or faculty that respected or valued their research interests was also very challenging (Johnson & Scott, 2021). The most common theme that Black men reported was that they consistently felt as if they were being watched on campus, their intellectual ability was always challenged by white colleagues and faculty and they felt they experienced the most difficulty with getting their research approved (Johnson & Scott, 2021). These mentioned differences were definitely something to continuously be aware of and consider throughout the study.

As it pertains to counseling, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Vital Statistics (2018) report that there are 85 CACREP accredited counselor education and supervision programs within the United States with an enrollment of 2,917 doctoral students. Of the 2,917 doctoral students that were enrolled, 25.09% of those students identified as African American/ Black. The number of enrolled African American doctoral students is an increase from 2016, which was 24.3%. Nevertheless, as the number of Black doctoral students in CACREP programs increase, simultaneously, there is a continued awareness and consistent theme that Black doctoral students do not feel equally supported and are inadequately prepared to succeed (Hollingsworth & Fassinger, 2002; Zeligman et al., 2015). Even among CACREP counseling programs, Black women also experienced isolation from white women and Black men, and Black men experienced challenges of getting their research approved (Shavers & Moore, 2014; Johnson & Scott, 2021).

While students play an active role in their educational experience and academic success (Baker & Moore, 2015), there is a responsibility and commitment that rests on the institution (Warren, 2016). The American Counselor Association (ACA, 2017) promulgates that the

counseling profession and its members should embody diversity and promote social justice. In agreement, many counselor educators and researchers alike posit that programs exhibit their commitment to diversity by recruiting and retaining students and faculty that is representative of a diverse population (Ju, 2020; Foxx et al., 2018, Graphin et al., 2016; Zeligman et al., 2015). The counseling program should also be culturally responsive to the unique needs of their culturally diverse students (Foxx et al., 2020). Furthermore, according to CACREP (2016) standard 1:K, institutions must make *"continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community."* Both the ACA and CACREP recommend that programs not only incorporate culturally relevant strategies into their admission and recruitment process, but also require programs to continuously promote and incorporate multicultural relevance in all core aspects of learning (Baker & Moore, 2015). However, there are limited models and research that support and inform CACREP programs on how to actively and successfully address each entity of this standard (Ju et al., 2020).

In concurrence with navigating and meeting the standards set by ACA and CACREP, it is also imperative that programs are aware of the unique experiences that African American students encounter (Henfield et. al, 2013) to adequately address them. The extent to which African American students experience graduate school and/or their counselor education program can be very unique (Barker, 2020; Gildersleeve et al., 2011, Rogers & Molina, 2006). Gaining a better understanding of Black students' experiences can provide imperative context for CACREP and its programs to successfully transition diversity efforts from the periphery of counselor preparation to its core (Stadler et al., 2006).

When considering racial climate and culture, despite CACREP's mission to diversify its programs and the counseling profession, the climate of the profession remains to mirror white-

centric culture (Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021). This type of cultural climate contributes to the reports of adverse experiences faced by minority students (Bryan, 2018; Haskins et al., 2013) and the students' perception of this climate (whether positive or negative) can have a direct impact on their success (Baker & Moore, 2015). Research shows that a negative racial climate leaves students feeling isolated (Harwood et al., 2012), tokenized (Haskins et al., 2013), and marginalized (Felder & Barker, 2013). In addition, students report experiences of reverse hostility, racial stereotypes (Williams et al., 2020), and racial aggressions (Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Harwood et al., 2012). Ultimately, these adverse experiences contribute to and impact students' success in the program and their success as a counselor or counselor educator.

Articles related to the lived experiences of Black students in counselor education programs, Black students navigating microaggressions and racial stereotypes, and diversity within CACREP programs are consistently surfacing (Baker & Moore, 2015; Harwood et al., 2012; Haskins et al., 2013, Henfield et al., 2011; Henfield et al., 2013; Protivnak & Foss, 2009; Williams et al., 2020). However, there is minimal research that integrates an understanding of the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs, students' perceptions of their institution meeting CACREP standard 1:K, and how institutions address the unique and diverse needs of their African American students. This research study is unique from previous studies in that it builds upon Black doctoral students' experiences, the students' perceptions of how their programs are meeting the CACREP standard 1:K and how counselor education programs are directly addressing the unique needs of Black doctoral students. The primary researcher of this study hopes that this study will provide counselor educators and counselor education programs with solutions and strategies that can be implemented to improve their programs and ensure that their Black doctoral students feel a part, heard, valued, and respected. The primary researcher hopes that by illuminating the voices of

Black doctoral students, their stories can be told and the framework of Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) will expose race, racism and corrupt systems in an effort to promote systemic change. Specific solutions for change will be discussed in concurrent chapters.

The subsequent sections will introduce the theoretical framework, the constructs for this dissertation study and will address the study's significance and purpose. Additionally, the research questions, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and operational definitions will also be discussed. For the purposes of this study, Black and African American terminology will be utilized interchangeably to refer to Black Americans born and/or raised in the United States or American culture.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher initially felt it was best to utilize Critical Race Theory (CRT) because of its goal to combine racism, power, and race in an effort to address the notions of color blindness and highlighting that neglecting racial injustices and differences continue to propel institutionalized racism (Martinez, 2014). However, there has been a great extent of controversy surrounding CRT. Many critics believe that CRT over emphasizes the phenomenon white versus Black and that CRT inadequately addresses anti-Blackness and the Black experience (Dumas & Ross, 2016). In response to CRT's focus as a theory of race or racism and its perceived inability to speak to anti-Blackness, Black Critical Theory also known as Black Crit was developed. BlackCrit focuses on the "theory of Blackness to confront anti-Blackness as a social construct and as an antagonism to anything white" (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 416). For this study, the researcher felt BlackCrit would best serve as the theoretical framework in an effort to deepen the understanding of Blacks and their experiences, address how anti-Blackness enables institutional systems and practices and how this consequently impacts the lived experiences of Black doctoral students.

Introduction of Constructs

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

The Council of Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was created to establish standards and guidelines for the counseling profession and counselor education (Lu & Pillay, 2020). According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation [CHEA] (2018), CACREP is one of the largest accrediting organizations for doctoral programs. CACREP accreditation is intended to measure the counseling doctoral program's quality and hold the program accountable for maintaining and demonstrating outlined standards. Ultimately, by measuring program quality and holding the program accountable for maintaining and demonstrating outline standards, students are better prepared, competent, and are a part of transformative learning. In alignment with the goals of accreditation, the goal of CACREP programs is to adequately prepare future counselor educators (doctoral students) for the field and to serve as advocates throughout the profession (Urofsky, Bobby & Ritchie, 2013).

As it relates to this study, outlined in section 1:K of the 2016 CACREP standards, CACREP states that it is the responsibility of "*the academic unit to make continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community*" (CACREP, 2016). However, studies show that African American doctoral students have a contrary experience (Haskins et al., 2013; Henfield et al., 2013; Green et al., 2017; Felder & Barker, 2013; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2020). This study aims to address students' perceptions of their program meeting CACREP standard 1:K.

African American Students at PWIs/ HWIs

Prior to African American students being permitted to attend predominantly white institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created to provide a

safe and welcoming space for African Americans (Brown et al., 2001). In 1954, African Americans were permitted to study at schools of their choosing including PWIs due to the Brown versus Board of Education ruling by the supreme court. While various desegregation laws and the Higher Education Act assisted in the increase of African Americans attending PWIs (Johnson, 2013), African Americans being accepted and cared for at PWIs was noted as challenging (Strayhorn, 2008). Most institutions lacked a desire to modify their PWI model and sent a clear message that they expected their Black students to conform to white hegemony and white standards. Although many schools are increasing in their diversity rates, white hegemony and standards within institutions still exist.

Arguably, due to the diversity in institutions proliferating in recent years, many institutions that were once classified as PWIs, no longer meet the over 50% requirement. Based on "isolated" events of racism that still occur at institutions that promote themselves as racially diverse due to their numbers, it is still ever present that these institutions still carry a history, demography, curriculum, climate, and traditions that represent whiteness and or white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva & Peoples, 2022). Therefore, these institutions are considered Historically White Institutions (HWIs). The term HWI contends that while these spaces aim to be culturally or racially diverse, the fact remains that their history speaks to a space that was created as a "white space" (Bonilla-Silva & Peoples, 2022, p. 2). White space refers to spaces that were originally designed for whites or the majority. These spaces are designed with the majority in mind and the culture is oftentimes constructed and maintained by white hegemony (Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

In addition to PWIs/HWIs not adjusting to meet the diverse needs of African American students, the continuation of racism exists. However, in these new "white spaces" racism typically shows up in the form of microaggressions (Knighton et al., 2020). In addition, research shows that PWIs/ HWIs attempt to address racism and historically "white spaces" with diversity

and inclusion initiatives that are white centered and lack inclusion (Lewis & Shah, 2021). These initiatives are created without regards to acknowledging the experiences of African American students and their unique needs.

Historical Perspective of African Americans in Counselor Education Doctoral Programs

A doctoral degree program in counselor education is meant to prepare future counselor educators to teach, conduct research, supervise counselors and counselors in training and advocate for the counseling profession. Counselor education has had a history of underrepresentation of people of color. Nevertheless, as the profession is growing, the number of African American students enrolled in CACREP Counselor Education programs has increased as well. As aforementioned, African American doctoral students make up 25.09% of doctoral students enrolled in CACREP programs (CACREP, 2016). However, African American doctoral students report challenging experiences and racism within their programs (Baker et al., 2015; Baker & Moore, 2015; Henfield et al, 2013; Harwood et. al, 2012; Haskins et al., 2013; Paone et al., (2019). Experiences such as isolation (Haskins et al., 2013), pressure or expectation to overperform or prove competence (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; McCluney et al., 2021), the need to educate others about their race or serve as a representative for their race (tokenization) (Haskins et al., 2013; Paone et al., 2019) and felt disconnected and not respected (Henfield et al., 2013). These articles addressed the experiences of African American doctoral students, however, a call for in-depth research connecting students' experiences in their doctoral programs to students' perspectives regarding their program meeting the CACREP standard 1:K is consistent across the literature.

Diverse Needs of African American Doctoral Students in CACREP Programs

While researchers have attempted to better understand the experiences of African American doctoral students, the literature is limited on identifying the specific needs of African

American doctoral students. The literature provides influences of doctoral experiences (Protivnak & Fos, 2009), the various systems of support doctoral students utilize to navigate their programs (Henfield et al., 2011), and the significance of building interracial trust with faculty (Brown & Grothas, 2021). In many of these studies, the majority of the participants identified a failure in their program's ability to address their needs as African American students (Haskin et al., 2013). Thus, the need for this research to identify African American doctoral students' specific needs from their own perspectives.

Significance of the Study

In response to CACREP's standard 1:K, many programs are actively working to determine the best formula for meeting the diverse needs of its students and creating an inclusive environment in an effort to better recruit and retain diverse students. The retention of diverse student populations, such as African Americans, in counselor education is pertinent to the counselor education program. However, as mentioned, to retain African Americans in counselor education programs, programs must be able to meet the unique needs of Black students (Ju et al., 2020). The significance of this study is to contribute to the body of literature regarding the experiences of African American doctoral students in counselor education and provide implications for CACREP accredited counselor education programs. Previously mentioned studies have not utilized both the critical phenomenological methodology and BlackCrit theoretical framework to address Black doctoral students' experiences, how their programs are meeting the CACREP standard 1:K and how counselor education programs are directly addressing the unique needs of Black doctoral students.

Purpose of the Study

By exploring the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at PWIs, how their institution is meeting CACREP

standard 1:k, and how their program addresses the unique needs of Black doctoral students; the purpose of this study was to provide CACREP, counselor educators, and counselor education programs with a solution that can be implemented to improve their programs and ensure that their Black doctoral students feel a part, heard, valued and respected. This proposed solution is a qualitative survey addendum that will be completed by Black doctoral students in their respective counselor preparation programs. This qualitative survey addendum is recommended to be a part of counselor education programs' CACREP self-study, and will specifically highlight Black doctoral students' experiences in counselor preparation programs in conjunction of meeting CACREP standard 1:K. The purpose of this qualitative survey addendum is to ensure that the experiences of Black doctoral students are represented in the most genuine way in accordance with their perspective. This study will add to the current literature by integrating an understanding of the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs, Black doctoral students' perception of their institution meeting CACREP standard 1:K, and how institutions address the unique and diverse needs of their African American students. From a critical phenomenological research approach, the primary researcher aims to extensively describe both the individual and collective experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Hays & Singh, 2012). The data collected from this study will provide implications for the CACREP and counselor education programs to better understand the perspectives of their African American students, their needs, and historically "white spaces" can impact or influence the educational experience of African American doctoral students in counselor education programs.

Research Questions

The primary research questions of this study are:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at predominately white institutions?
2. What are African American doctoral students' perceptions of their institution meeting CACREP standard Section 1K: *"The academic unit makes continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community?"*
3. In what ways are institutions addressing the unique needs of African American doctoral students in CACREP counselor education programs at predominantly white institutions?

Assumptions

The assumptions in this study are:

(a) Participants will answer all questions honestly and transparently.

(b) African American doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs experience a challenge or barrier in their programs.

(c) The experiences of African Americans doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs have an impact on their racial and counselor educator identity.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study that I will control are that:

(a) Participation is limited to African Americans that meet the inclusion criteria for the study.

(b) Participation is limited to African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs.

(c) Participation is limited to current African American doctoral students that are in their 2nd year of study or above and current graduates.

Limitations

The limitations of the study include:

(a) Considering the researcher is identified as an African American doctoral student there is potential for researcher bias.

(b) Social Desirability- the participants may have a desire to appease the interviewer, therefore impacting their responses.

Operational Definitions

The operational definitions are as follows:

(a) African American/ Black- for the purpose of this study, participants will self-identify and self-report their racial identity as an African American or Black. African American will be utilized interchangeably upon the participants' preference.

(b) Doctoral Student in CACREP Accredited Program

Doctoral students will self-identify as a student currently enrolled in a CACREP accredited program. CACREP is the organization that accredits masters, doctoral and specialty programs in counseling. This accreditation board ensures that programs are in compliance with widely recognized standards.

(c) Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)/ Historically White Institutions (HWI)

Participants will be students in a PWI that has a population of 50% or more white students or a HWI that is historically known to be predominately white, however, the white population has decreased slightly below 50%. Despite the ratios, the school should not be labeled as a historically black college and university (HBCU).

Summary

In summation, chapter one provided a broad overview and introduction to the significance of this study. Existing research has explored the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs; however, a gap in current research is still very prevalent. This study seeks to provide CACREP, counselor

educators, and counselor education programs with a proposed solution that can be implemented to improve their programs and ensure that their Black doctoral students feel a part, heard, valued and respected. In addition, to ensure that programs are meeting CACREP standards; specifically, CACREP standard 1:K. This proposed solution is a qualitative survey addendum to the CACREP self-study that counselor education programs utilize to evaluate how their program(s) are meeting current CACREP standards. The purpose of this qualitative survey addendum will be to address the system in which CACREP programs assess and analyze how they are meeting CACREP standards, specifically CACREP standard 1:k, by illuminating the Black doctoral students' voice and perspective and ensuring that their experiences are represented in the most genuine way. This study will also add to the current literature by integrating an understanding of the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs, Black doctoral students' perception of their institution meeting CACREP standard 1:K, and how institutions address the unique and diverse needs of their African American students.

Organization of Study

Chapter one included an introduction to the topic and constructs, the significance and purpose of the study, the research questions, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study, the operational definitions, and a summary of the chapter. In chapter two, there will be an extensive and comprehensive review of the literature including the theoretical framework, CACREP organization and standards, African American Students at PWIs & HWIs, and the Historical Perspective of African Americans in Counselor Education Doctoral Programs. The purpose of the literature review is to provide background on the topic, guide the methodology, and inform the researcher of what needs to be examined. In Chapter three, the methodology will be outlined in the following sections: the purpose of the study, the research questions,

positionality statement, the research design, and a summary of the chapter. Chapter 4 will review the findings of this study and Chapter 5 will consist of a discussion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at PWIs, how their institution is meeting CACREP standard 1:K, and how their program addresses the unique needs of Black doctoral students. This chapter provided an overview of the existing literature and discussed the gaps in the literature that this study will aim to satisfy. Multiple databases were utilized to conduct a comprehensive literature review search. The following key words were utilized: African Americans, counselor education, racial microaggressions, CACREP, culturally responsive, recruitment, and diverse needs. This chapter is organized into four sections to capture the following information in depth: (a) BlackCrit Theoretical Framework (b)African American Students at PWIs/ HWIs, (c) The Historical Perspective of African Americans in counselor Education Doctoral Programs, (d) History and Benefits of CACREP (e) Supportive Factors that African American Doctoral Students Find Useful and (f) Summary of the Chapter.

Theoretical Framework

Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit)

It is significant to mention that BlackCrit developed as a response to Critical Race Theory (CRT) and CRT and its tenets are heavily inclusive within the BlackCrit framework. CRT, dating back to the 1970s, was used as an American legal practice to analyze race and racism (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). In an effort to investigate social institutions and demystify racism and racial oppression (Crenshaw, 1995), CRT is utilized to question and challenge the notion that race is a norm (Delgado, 1995) and is found embedded in white hegemony (Taylor et al., 2009). Ultimately, the goal of CRT is to highlight that neglecting racial injustices and differences will continue to propel institutionalized racism (Martinez, 2014). There is a significant need to expose, challenge, and disrupt narratives of the dominant.

CRT has five major tenets that are utilized in the transformation of education pedagogy (Cabrera, 2018) and can create educational environment spaces that empower students of color to be in a position of an equitable learner (Haskins & Singh, 2015). The first tenet is the intersectionality of race and racism and explains how racism is societal endemic. This tenet postulates that racism is rooted and ingrained culturally, psychologically, and legally contingent upon class, sex, sexual orientation, and national origin (Solorzano et al., 2005). These aspects of identity intersect with racism which is considered to be at the foundation of modern society (Singh, 2015). The intersectionality of these identities not only perpetuate privilege for the majority but concurrently marginalize the minority. This tenet specifically applies to this study as it identifies and addresses potential racism that may be seen as a barrier from the perspective of the participants in the study.

The second tenant of CRT speaks to color blindness and how interests of power can perpetuate the creation of systems of oppression (Cabrera, 2018). This tenet illuminates the notion that institutions and systems, specifically those in education and mental health, continue to operate within a system that is centered in whiteness and minimizes the reality of oppression (Ladson-Billings, 2010). The thought that racism no longer exists due to the changes in society is liberalism at its best (Rocco et. al., 2014). This tenet seeks to highlight the racial power structure that doctoral students may experience in their doctoral programs.

Tenet three highlights the advocates and the activists of CRT. This tenet focuses on the counter narratives of color blindness, meritocracy, and the claims of validity from the majority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). By allowing African Americans to curate their own stories and experiences, African Americans not only feel empowered by naming their experiences (Haskins & Singh, 2015) the narrative communicated by the dominant is countered (Johnson, 2018). Similar to the purpose of this proposed study, providing space for African American doctoral

students to share their experiences illuminates their voices and sheds light on how their experiences impact their matriculations through their programs.

The fourth tenet of CRT is convergence. This tenet aims to encourage caution when individuals examine and interpret victories of marginalized populations (Hooks, 2004). This tenet highlights the thought that substantial change occurs when the dominant (white people) is affected or at the heart of interest (Haskins & Singh, 2015). In the case of Brown versus Board of Education, the idea or plight in this case perceived by many was that the decision to allow African American students in what was once considered white schools was a benefit to whites as well. This tenet is also known as the "centrality of experiential knowledge (p. 212)" or as "unique voices of color (p.212)," which means that African Americans can articulate their stories and challenges better than those in the majority (Cabrera, 2018).

Tenet five, the last tenet, sheds light on the value of being white (Haskins & Singh, 2015) and reinforces the notion that white privilege and power are customary and common (Cabrera, 2018). This tenet presents that white privilege may show up in various forms throughout institutions and programs. In relation to this study, this tenet can potentially reinforce the notion of how African American doctoral students perceive their white faculty members and the power they possess.

All five of these CRT tenets are connected to counselor education and can provide context for addressing challenges, injustices, and concerns regarding counselor education curriculum, interactions between faculty and students, and traditional educational models that are potentially derived from white hegemony (Haskins & Sigh, 2015). Thus, initially proving the need for the use of this framework as it relates to the lived experiences of African American doctoral students at PWIs in CACREP accredited programs.

However, this study not only aimed to address the social context and institutionalized racism that Black doctoral students may experience in their counselor education programs; but it also aimed to amplify the voices and explore the lived experiences of Black doctoral experiences in counselor education programs through their lens and their perspective as a Black individual. This study aims to rely more on the critical theorization of Blackness (Dumas & Ross, 2016) and how antiblackness impacts their lived experiences (Wilderson, 2010). While CRT was meant to analyze race and racism as a response to systemic institutionalized racism (Dumas & Ross, 2016); CRT does not explicitly theorize "Blackness" but more so addresses a theory based on racism and how white supremacy contributes to institutionalized racism (Melamed, 2011). CRT also posits the framework of understanding "what happened and who it happened to" rather than gaining a better understanding of "his/her story" (Knaus, 2009, p. 142). With that said, this study calls for a more in-depth and specific lens into the Black experience and its relation to anti-Blackness which calls for Black Critical Theory or BlackCrit.

BlackCrit is a response to CRT that aims to deepen the understanding of Blacks and their experiences and addresses anti-Blackness in lieu of addressing white supremacy found in institutions and racial ideologies (Dumas & Ross, 2016). BlackCrit focuses on the story and experience of Blacks and how those experiences relate to structural racism. BlackCrit helps us to better understand how blackness matters as we better understand how to utilize CRT's five tenets to transform educational pedagogy (Cabrera, 2018). The framings of BlackCrit include but are not limited to Anti-Blackness and BlackCrit creating space for "Black Lives Matter" (Dumas & Ross, 2016). Anti-Blackness is endemic to how we make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimension of human life. In addition, BlackCrit creates space for and highlights the meaning of "Black Lives Matter" while concurrently attempting to capture the

complexity of being Black as a positive self-identification, rather than a statement of resistance (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 423).

For this study, the researcher utilized BlackCrit to not just understand potential racist practices and institutionalized barriers against Black doctoral counselor education students, but rather, to better understand and address how antiblackness enables racial practices and institutionalized barriers while amplifying the Black experience through their voice and story. The Black voice becomes the center of the research and aims to address anti-Blackness while providing implications for dismantling it. Furthermore, most studies that focus on African American students in counselor education programs utilized CRT as the framework, therefore utilizing BlackCrit will contribute to the literature and calls for a radical solution. As previously mentioned, a proposed solution to address the system in which CACREP programs assess and analyze how they are meeting CACREP standards is needed. This solution is inclusive of creating and providing a qualitative survey addendum for the CACREP self-study that is utilized by programs to reflect on their programs and for them to obtain accreditation. This qualitative survey will ensure that the experiences of Black doctoral students are represented in the most genuine way according to their perspective.

African American Students at HWIs/ PWIs

Since May 2020 there has been a massive uptick in discussions surrounding race (Lake, 2021). Following the deaths of George Floyd, Breyonna Taylor, and so many others assassinated by white police officers, the nation has taken a turn in the ways they discuss and approach race. However, the discussion surrounding race as it pertains to education has been a constant discussion and uphill battle for many decades. Despite attempts from legislation through the Brown vs. Board of Education (1954), the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the “Every Student

Succeeds Act" of 2015, Black students continue to experience inequities and covert and overt racism (Green et al., 2017).

Historical White Institutions

Prior to integration laws and mandates, African Americans were not allowed to attend white institutions (Brown et. al, 2001). With the assistance of formerly enslaved persons and white philanthropists, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created so that African Americans would have a protected space to learn and matriculate for higher education (Brown et. al., 2001). These schools were inclusive of Atlanta University, Howard University, Shaw University, Fisk University, Leland College, Lincoln University, Wilberforce University, and Hampton Institute (Clewell & Anderson, 1995) to name a few. These HBCUs not only served as safe spaces for Blacks to learn, but they also served as spaces for African Americans to feel uplifted and earn a college degree. By 1985, approximately 1,151 graduates had earned a college degree from a Black institution of higher learning (Clewell & Anderson, 1995). Nevertheless, as society grew and laws were changed, African Americans were permitted to study at schools of their choosing in 1954, including PWIs. This change was a result of the Brown versus Board of Education ruling and the supreme court ruling that it was also applicable to postsecondary educational institutions (Vera, 1989).

In 1965, the Higher Education Act assisted in the increase of African American students at PWIs (Johnson, 2013). However, being accepted and cared for at PWIs can come with a set of challenges and inequities (Strayhorn, 2008). While PWIs were mandated to grant admittance to Black students, there was minimal thought or action around how to accommodate and meet the needs of Black students. The institution's lack of desire and action to change their PWI model, displayed that Black students would need to conform to white hegemony and standards rather

than white culture evolving to meet the needs of its diverse population (Taylor, 1989). This also speaks to the challenges and premise of HWIs.

As aforementioned, HWIs are institutions that were once considered PWIs but currently have an enrollment of 49% or below of white students. However, due to the schools' history, historical demography, racial climate, and symbols and traditions that embody and reproduce whiteness and white supremacy, these schools are still considered "white spaces" (Moore, 2008; Bonilla-Silva & Peoples, 2022). Lefebvre (1991) posits that space is a social product and can reproduce particular social relations, inclusive of hegemonic relations that serve as control, power, and dominance. Which contends the validity in research today that continues to speak to PWIs/HWIs not meeting the needs of diverse populations (Mwangi et al., 2018; Shahid et al., 2018) and continuing to demonstrate racism. Research shows that in "white spaces" (Moore, 2008) racism is usually experienced in the form of microaggressions (Knighton et. al, 2020).

The term microaggression refers to hidden, passive, or subtle forms of racism and or discrimination (Pittman, 2012). The literature on microaggressions and how it is experienced by African Americans at PWIs and in higher education remains consistent throughout the literature (Pittman, 2012; Decuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Knighton et. al, 2020). Kangha et al., (2018) and Haynes et al., (2016), discuss that microaggressions are typically unaddressed and Black students report that oftentimes they chose not to respond or address the microaggression in fear of isolation and perpetuating stereotypes such as "threatening Black woman" and "angry Black Woman" (Jangha et al., 2018). Harwood et. al (2012) studied the experiences of 81 students of color, utilizing focus groups, at PWIs and their experiences with microaggressions. The study emerged 4 racial microaggression themes: (a) racial jokes and verbal comments, (b) racial slurs writing in shared spaces, (c) segregated spaces and unequal treatment, and (d) denial and minimization of racism. In addition to the emergent themes, the researchers found that

participants reported their experiences as unwelcoming and unsupportive due to the overt racism or racial slurs they heard from their peers.

In addition, Williams et al. (2020) conducted a focus group study with 36 undergraduate and graduate students to explain the experience of racial microaggressions experienced by Black students at PWIs. The study yielded 15 themes that included assumptions about intelligence, denial of individual racism by the majority, stereotypes, avoiding or distancing from Blacks, reverse racism hostility, pathologizing minority culture or appearance, perpetuating myths of meritocracy, false color blindness, invisibility, and others. The Harwood et. al (2012) study and the Williams et al. (2020) study only provide one challenge that Black students experience at PWIs. This study aims to provide an in-depth perspective of Black doctoral students' experiences and challenges and how the system (their program) can be intentional about creating supportive and inclusive learning environments that promote retention and inclusivity.

There is also research that addresses students' perspectives of diversity and inclusion initiatives at their universities. Lewis and Shah (2021) conducted a qualitative case study that explored how 30 Black students who attended a PWI with diversity and inclusion initiatives make meaning of their experiences with racism. The study was conducted as a focus group with eight to twelve students that lasted approximately an hour. The study yielded three themes: (a) surface level diversity and no inclusion, (b) whiteness-centered diversity and inclusion, and (c) sense of not belonging (Lewis & Shah, 2021). Student reports and subthemes included student feeling as if there was a quota system and feeling as a token. Students also reported that it was clear that their universities felt "under pressure" to create the diversity and inclusion initiatives and created them from a space of "white privilege" that offered them "white comfort" (Lewis & Shah, 2021, p. 194-196). From the perspective of the BlackCrit lens, this research and others, posit that when white hegemony creates diversity and inclusion initiatives without understanding

the history of racism and whiteness embedded in PWIs/HWIs (Bourke, 2016) and how those structures directly affect Black students; they can reinforce stereotypes and exacerbate self-segregation (Woodall, 2013). Hence, the importance of utilizing BlackCrit as the theoretical framework to concurrently gain a deeper understanding of how these anti-Black practices impact the experience of the Black students. This also emphasizes the need for a study that illuminates the experiences of Black doctoral counselor education students, their perspective of their program meeting CACREP standard 1:K and their perspective on how their institution is evolving to meet their needs.

The conversation and research surrounding PWIs being intentional about shifting the culture climate and evolving to meet the needs of its diverse population is in alignment with CACREPs standard 1:K. Moreover, within the field of counseling, the body of research that is committed to the experiences and retention of African Americans in counselor education programs at PWIs, also continue to suggest that there are programs that are not successfully meeting diversity and the CACREP standard 1:K (Baker & Moore, 2015; Foxx et al., 2018; Henfield et al., 2013; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; Shin et al., 2011). While African American experiences are unique, the fact remains that the African American experience, at a PWI, is valuable and should be met with equity. As an example, African American doctoral students should be provided with an inclusive and supportive learning environment where they feel safe and cared about. To this end, the next step and call for educators is to take a proactive and informative approach to better understand the perspectives and experiences of their African American students is a necessity. This next step is a proposed solution that will ultimately impact the way they assess and analyze their systems in regard to meeting accreditation standards. In an effort to address systems such as the CACREP standard 1:K, which will then inform counselor education programs and ultimately impact classrooms, creating a qualitative survey addendum to

the CACREP self-study that is required for programs to obtain accreditation is the proposed solution. This qualitative survey addendum will be inclusive of qualitative questions for Black doctoral students to answer in regard to their experiences as Black doctoral students in their CACREP programs. The data from this qualitative survey will ensure that Black doctoral students' experiences are represented in the most genuine way.

African American Women at HWI/PWIs

"To determine more fully the impact of Black women in education we must know more about who they were and what they did, as well as the issues and movements that characterized the different periods of time during which they lived" (Collier-Thomas, 2001, p.178). In alignment with this study and the BlackCrit theoretical framework, this quote posits that in order for us as people, educators, researchers, etcetera, to fully understand the impact of Black women in education we must know about her lived experiences. For centuries, Black women have been "othered" in an effort to exclude or further marginalize them. In addition, Black women have not always had the same rights and privileges to attain a higher education. It was not until 1837 that Black women were admitted into Oberlin College in Ohio, which was one of the first institutions to allow Black women. Decades later, Black women were able to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities that were specifically designed for Black women. These colleges included Bennett College (1873; Greensboro, NC) and Spelman College (1881; Atlanta, GA). While these spaces were made available and created to support Black women, their journey towards higher education was still tempestuous.

As previously stated, Black women earn degrees at a higher rate than Black men. However, the pursuit of these degrees is not easy. Often, Black women are typically having to navigate their intersectionality and what many refer to as "double jeopardy: being Black and female." This simply means that Black women are a part of two oppressed groups: being both

female and Black. In higher education and particularly at PWIs, Black women have reported that they feel isolated, demoralized (Carroll, 1982), disrespected, and consistently navigate microaggressions (Shavers & Moore, 2014). In addition to these sentiments, Black women also report that they experience both racism and sexism in covert and overt forms (Shavers & Moore, 2014). This is very different from their white women counterparts (Shavers & Moore, 2014). Ultimately, their emotional well-being is in jeopardy of being compromised or threatened when they pursue academics. Nevertheless, one may call attention to the consistent uptick in numbers of Black women pursuing and attaining higher education. How could this occur if Black women are so distressed, oppressed, and yet they seem to be content? Research argues that this resiliency may be attributed to the Superwoman Schema also known as the Strong Black Woman (SBW). The Superwoman Schema was developed to highlight the "strong" attributes and ways of coping Black women possess, despite oppression and adversity (Beauboeuf-LaFontant, 2009; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). These SBW are known to be independent, caregivers, hardworking and aim to achieve great heights. These women also tend to "make a way out of no way" and are rooted by their religion, faith, or spirituality (Nelson et al., 2016). Which explains why despite the adversity, oppression, and barriers faced, Black women continue to "push through" and attain higher education.

On the contrary, to remain present and show up as authentically as possible, Black women oftentimes feel the need to contain their emotions or not immediately attend to their own emotions and feelings (Watson & Hunter, 2015). They oftentimes, appear as if everything is okay and "show face" (Watson & Hunter, 2015). Carl Jung (1990) proved this to be true when posited that people may adopt what is known as a persona or a mask to adapt to their social surroundings in an effort of survival. Oftentimes, Black women are forced to not only do this in everyday life but also as they matriculate through a doctoral program (Shavers & Moore, 2019).

Historically, Black women have often been seen in a negative light and their "strong" personalities or assertiveness has resulted in them being seen as angry, argumentative, hostile, lazy, or even promiscuous (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016). In an effort to combat or dispel these stereotypes, Black women, in particular Black doctoral seeking women, tend to shift or mask their persona so that they are accepted within their environment (Abrams et al., 2018). This can not only be exhausting and draining but can truly impact one's emotional well-being. That said, it is evident that the systems in place, specifically at PWIs, can negatively impact the Black woman. The need to better understand the lived experience of the Black woman doctoral student is needed, thus making this study significant.

African American Men at HWI/ PWI

Dr. W. E. B. Dubois was the first African American male to earn a doctorate degree from Harvard University in 1895. He was very aware of the challenges the Black man faced and coined the term "Talented Tenth." In his writing he wrote:

> *The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the best of this race that they may guide the mass away from the contamination and death of the worst, in their own races* (Dubois, 1903, p.209).

Dr. Dubois believed that 1 in 10 Black men had the innate ability to lead the Black community. He believed that the "Talented Tenth" had a responsibility to the Black community to acquire education (specifically higher education), write books, and be a spearhead for social change. Dr. Dubois also speaks to "The Negro Problem" which emphasizes the notion that whites believe that African Americans were only meant to dig mines and work on farms (Dubois, 1903). He also posits that many African Americans built this country (the United States) and many of the inventions and innovations that we have today should be credited to the Black man, however, the

white man felt their intellectual abilities should not be celebrated or acknowledged (Dubois, 1904). Ironically, these challenges are very similar to the challenges that Black men still encounter today.

Almost a century later, Jawanza Kunjufu (2001) wrote a book entitled State of Emergency: We must save African American males. The purpose of this book was to outline concerning issues surrounding African American men. These concerns were inclusive of but not limited to the high number of African American male children in special education and the high rates of African American males that are incarcerated or tied to litigation with the judiciary system. In addition to these alarming high-rate statistics, more Black men earn their high school graduate equivalent diploma (GED) behind bars than Black men that graduate from college (Merida, 2007). With these alarming concerns, one could question whether the system has truly changed since Dr. Dubois's writings and if generational bondage still continues to affect the Black community, in particular the Black man.

While the preponderance of statistics perpetuates the negative perspective of the Black man, Dr. Dubois' "Talented Tenth" amongst Black men is still very relevant and could be argued that more than 1 in 10 Black men are college educated. According to the US Census (2021), there were 7,921,000 African Americans that attained a college degree. Of those 7,921,000 African American college degrees, 1,972,000 of those college degrees were attained by Black men. In addition, according to the US Census (2021), 841,000 Black men attained masters' degrees and 151,000 Black men attained doctoral degrees. While these numbers show growth in the educated Black man, data from the National Science Foundation (2020) still shows that white men are twice as likely to attain a graduate degree than Black men. While this is disheartening, this statistic is not the consequence of Black men alone. Multiple studies have shown that the rate of African American males enrolled in lower-level academic programs, such as beginner

level English or basic mathematics, is higher than white students and oftentimes African American males are overlooked for higher levels of learning courses such as advanced placement and college level courses (Scott et al., 2013; Harper, 2015). These courses typically offered in high school can have a major impact on a students' college trajectory and potentially their preparedness for success in college. This aligns with a speech made by Frederick Douglas at a convention in 1883. In his speech he said:

> *Though the colored man is no longer the subject to barter and sale, he is surrounded by an adverse settlement which fetters all his movements. In his downward course he meets with no resistance, but his course upward is resented and resisted at every step of his progress. If he comes in ignorance, rags, and wretchedness he conforms to the popular belief of his character, and in that character, he is welcome; but if he shall come as a gentleman, a scholar and a statesman, he is hailed as a contradiction to the national faith concerning his race, and his coming is resented as imprudence. In one case he may provoke contempt and derision, but in the other he is an affront to pride and provokes malice.*

Moreover, while Black men in doctoral degree programs are not as common as Black women, they are still not an anomaly. For those Black men that are in doctoral degree programs, studies show that despite their success in their doctoral programs they still experience isolation, challenging transitions, and gendered racism (Johnson & Scott, 2021). Similar to Dr. Dubois' writing of "The Negro Problem," and Douglas (1883), Black men have expressed that they consistently feel as though their intelligence or academic ability is challenged, they are not as respected, they are faced with racism, stereotypes and microaggressions, and finding a faculty member that values their work and research can be daunting (Harper, 2015; Johnson & Scott, 2021). From the perspective of the BlackCrit lens, Black men have stated that they feel white

colleagues and faculty see them as a threat, which perpetuates their mistreatment (Brooks & Steen, 2011). Important to note, these challenges found in the literature faced by Black men are typically challenges Black men find at PWIs.

Historical Perspective of African Americans in Counselor Education Programs

The purpose of the doctoral degree in counselor education is to prepare students for teaching, researching and scholarship, supervising and advocating for the counseling profession (CACREP, 2016; Sears & Davis, 2003). While the counseling profession has had a long history of an underrepresentation in people of color (Dinsmore & England, 1996) those numbers have increased. Additionally, the number of African American doctoral students seeking a doctoral degree in counselor education has also increased over the past few decades (Haizlip, 2012). Despite the increase of African American doctoral students in counselor education programs, research has shown that Black doctoral students report challenging experiences and racism within their programs (Baker et al., 2015; Baker & Moore, 2015; Harwood et. al, 2012; Paone et al., 2019). Within the literature, many African American and minority doctoral students report that they feel isolated, (Haskins et al., 2013), pressure or expectation to overperform to prove competence due to white dominance (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; Baker & Moore, 2015), expected to educate others or serve as a representative for their race, tokenized (Paone et al, 2019), and felt disconnected and not as respected as their white colleagues (Henfield et, al., 2013).

The research provides evidence that students of color experience classroom cultures and interactions with their colleagues and faculty that is racially based (Hasking & Singh, 2015). In Henfield et. al, (2013), participants reported that they felt disconnected for an array of reasons, however, one of the main reasons were the disrespectful exchanges that occurred in their classrooms. Participants reported that during courses such as multicultural, classroom

interactions became disrespectful and defensive. These interactions left many participants feeling very alone and uncomfortable with their colleagues and certain faculty. In addition to the uncomfortable exchanges within classrooms, participants also reported that professors lacked cultural understanding, and some were very imprudent (Henfield et. al., 2013).

Paone et al. (2019) conducted a six-year study to explore the experiences of 11 counselor students of color in multicultural courses. The study revealed that participants felt there was a need to assume a "teaching role" within their classrooms in an effort to "challenge racist and stereotypical viewpoints" (Paone et al., 2019, p. 1). The study yielded two superior themes: (a) a self or externally imposed need to teach and (b) a perceived need to correct course curriculum and peer racism and misunderstandings. Some participants reported an observed ethnocentrism and racism in their white peers and reported that they felt the need to share out or educate their peers because they were the only representative of their racial group and felt they needed to represent and/or defend their racial groups. Some participants also reported that they need to speak up or correct misconceptions articulated by their white peers. Participants reported that they often found their white counterparts making generalizations, having a bad perception of people of color, or not fully understanding people of color. The notion that the trainee felt they carried the responsibility of speaking up, left students feeling burdened, one-sided, and at times exhausting. Similarly to participants in Haskins et al. (2013), the participants felt tokenized. Both studies mentioned provided implications for how counselor educators can minimize students' need to feel as if they have to be a representative for their race, however, the studies did not address how a more racially equitable distributed classroom/ cohort could not only impact students of color but also provide a supportive space of inclusivity and promote connectedness (Paone et al., 2019). Research across disciplines provide multiple findings that indicate factors that contribute to graduate student success. However, one of the most powerful factors

considered that impacts graduate student success is arguably a student's feeling of connectedness to their peers, faculty, the department, and the program itself (Bain et al., 2011).

The lack of connectedness between students and their colleagues and an embedded emphasis on white dominance can also create an environment of competition. Hipolito-Delgado et al., (2017) conducted a case study that explored the protective and risk factors for students of color enrolled in counseling education programs. The study yielded multiple protective and risk factors. A risk factor that was also highlighted in other studies is white dominance and how this dominance marginalizes minority students (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017). Furthermore, this dominance not only creates tension amongst students, but it also encourages students to feel the need to overperform to be deemed competent. One of the participants from the Hipolito-Delgado et al., (2017) reported that they felt judged from their peers and felt their opinions were discounted due to being ethnically different. Another participant from the Hipolito-Delgado et al., (2017) study reported they felt a lot of pressure from peers and colleagues and that if they said something that the "majority" may not agree with, they would be "shut down" (p. 483).

Baker and Moore (2015) also speak to students' sentiments regarding being "shut down" (p.78). Baker and Moore (2015) sought to qualitatively examine the perceived cultural competence of counselor education doctoral programs through the narratives of 19 racially or ethnically underrepresented students utilizing the critical race theory. One of the themes that emerged from their study was "talk the talk, walk the walk." Eight of the nineteen participants reported that when they would attempt to share their perspective on cultural competence, they would be shut down by their professor who proclaimed to be culturally competent. Other participants also reported ambiguous situations that emerged such as receiving unclear feedback and hidden expectations. One participant reported that she received a lower grade than her fellow group members on a group project and when she asked why, she received ambiguous feedback,

and the professor would not provide grave detail regarding the grade discrepancy (Baker & Moore, 2015). Additionally, another participant reported that they felt they were always striving for a moving target. Conclusively, participants didn't always feel that their faculty "walked the talk" of cultural competence.

Placing the sole responsibility for change on the individual is "culturally imposition" as if functions from the lens and presumption that change only occurs within the individual regardless of the environment" (Chang et al., 2010). Although these studies share the experiences of African American and minority students and provide implications for moving towards a more diverse environment, they do not specifically address the systems and they lack the integration of understanding the African American doctoral students' experiences, their perception of their programs meeting the CACREP standard 1:K and how their program are meeting their specific needs.

Supportive Factors that African American Doctoral Students Find Useful

Researchers have aimed to better understand the experiences of African American doctoral students in counselor education programs and have focused on multicultural training competence and the program culture in counselor education. While it is apparent that many African American doctoral students in counselor education face many challenges and barriers, it is important to highlight some of the supportive factors that have historically been done based on the literature. While many doctoral students attribute their success to their persistence and resilience, assertiveness (Henfield, 2011) and their ability to find people that identify as they do for support, there is also literature that shows that programs and faculty members also contribute to Black doctoral students' success.

Henfield et. al. (2011) utilized human agency and a phenomenological methodology to investigate the various systems of support that doctoral students utilized to navigate their

respective programs. The following four themes emerged: (a) assertiveness; (b) more experienced African American students; (c) race-based organization, and (d) personal and professional care from advisors. Henfield et. al, (2011) implied that counselor educator programs create a warm and accepting environment for its African American students by creating an environment that promotes peer support and positive interaction, and ensures that counselor educator advisors understand their role, responsibilities, and commitment to students. A participant from the Henfield (2011) study spoke about how their program had a mandatory orientation session for new students and this provided students with valuable information to navigate their program. They were also provided with a student handbook that worked as a thorough guide for all coursework and expectations. When students were uncertain about various coursework guidelines, expectations, or had questions, participants from the Cartwright et al. (2021) study spoke about the impact of having a mentor that looked like them. The participant spoke about how their respective university was intentional about hiring faculty of color and this truly gave students the opportunity to have a mentor that they could identify with.

Moreover, participants from the Haskins et al (2015) study spoke about how their faculty of color were "proactive" in supporting them and rarely had to be prompted to discuss cultural issues or broach a situation (p.170). The participants felt as though the faculty of color were always willing to address cultural differences and issues with students. Brown and Grothaus (2021) explored the interracial trust between Black doctoral students and white faculty members. This phenomenological study had 10 Black doctoral student participants that described their experiences with white faculty members that served as their mentors and or clinical supervisor. From this study, six themes emerged: setting fewer rigid boundaries, practicing transparency, taking the initiative, being congruent, honoring the proteges' strengths and experiences, and advocating for equity. Like the Henfield et al. (2011) study, Brown & Grothaus (2021) found

that participants reported a better relationship with their advisor, mentor, and or supervisor when the supervisor aimed to show a concern for them beyond the professional and academic realm. The participants also noted that when advisors, mentors, and supervisors were willing to hear their experiences, oppressions, and challenges as an African American doctoral student, the relationship was more authentic, and the student felt more supported (Brown & Grothaus, 2021). Along with being open and creating a safe space, participants noted that transparency and congruence were important factors that created a safe space and trust. Participants reported that they observed their mentors, advisors, and or supervisors in times of adversity and how the mentor, advisor or supervisor handled the situation. Lastly, the participants noted that they appreciated when their mentor, advisor, or supervisor acknowledged and valued their strengths and experiences (Brown & Grothaus, 2021). Brown and Grothaus (2021) found that their participants had white advisors and or mentors that took initiative and were not uncomfortable broaching cultural issues. In addition, participants from the Brown and Grothaus (2021) stated that they really appreciated the white faculty members that were transparent with them, their sentiments and actions were congruent when it came to social justice, and their white advisors or mentors honored their strengths, "called them on their B.S." and challenged them when needed and appropriate (p. 78).

Protivnak & Foss (2009) analyzed what influenced doctoral students' experiences from 141 counselor education doctoral students. The themes that emerged were: (a) departmental culture, (b) mentoring, (c) academics, (d) support systems, and (e) personal issues. The participants in this study discussed how these themes influenced not only their doctoral experiences but also ultimately determined their success in their programs. Protivnak & Foss (2009) concluded that more in-depth research that sought to understand the experiences of doctoral students and how their institutions were meeting their needs could be useful.

These studies do not necessarily imply or suggest that all programs should model the findings of these researchers, however, just as Protivnak and Foss (2009) concluded, it suggests that more in-depth research should be conducted to determine the experiences of doctoral students and how their institutions are meeting their needs.While these studies provided data and implications for how students successfully navigate their doctoral programs and factors that influence their experience, the research remains limited in identifying how institutions can meet the perceived needs of Black doctoral students as it is aligned with the CACREP 1:K standard. It is also important to mention that many of the participants in the previous studies identified a failure in their program's ability to address their specific needs as an African American (Haskins et. al. (2013).

History & Benefits of CACREP

A broad and general goal of accreditation for a program is to addresses changes in the technical, social, and economical environment and provide guidance on how a program may need to adapt to changes in the environment that they operate (ie. growing diverse environments) (CHEA, 2010). When a program is accredited, the interests of the students, their parents, and the academic institution are all protected (Bahen & Miller, 1998). This protection is obtained by ensuring that the program that is aiming to be accredited, meets, or exceeds an expected or standard level of performance that are developed by experts in that respective field (Garfolo & L' Huillier, 2015). Focusing on the outcome of meeting set standards and the process of self-examination utilizing the standards are the foundational purposes of accreditation (Bahen & Miller, 1998). Beneficially, program accreditation serves as a validation for the program's graduates and indicates that the graduate has met a normed universal standard for that particular field (Bahen & Miller, 1998; Haight, 1992). In addition, many employers and educational programs often prefer candidates who have graduated from accredited programs and/ or

institutions. For the program seeking accreditation, the process to obtain accreditation provides educational programs with feedback on the program overall and how the program can improve. Similar to many other mental health professions such as psychology and social work, the helping professions were not officially recognized with accreditation bodies until the mid to late 1900s (Lu & Pillay, 2020). With an emphasis on strengthening the counseling profession's identity, in 1981 the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was created so that the counseling profession and counselor education would have established standards (Lu & Pillay, 2020).

Prior to CACREP's inception in 1952, the Personnel and Guidance Association was renamed the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA). The purpose of this association was to join various organizations such as the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA), the National Association of Guidance and Counselor Trainers (NAGCT), the Student Personnel Association for Teacher Education (SPATE), and the American College Personnel Association to have a larger and unified voice in the profession (Sellers, 1975). In July 1992, the APGA changed its name to the American Counselor Association (ACA), which is what it is still known as today. The goal of the ACA is to service professional counselors within the United Stated and within 50 other countries (ACA, 2022). The ACA has a comprehensive network that is inclusive of 19 divisions and 50 branches. For the purpose of this study, the division that will be highlighted is the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES).

Since the development of APGA, the counseling profession has been attempting to strengthen its professional identity (Neukrug, 2012). The ACES developed a series of standards and created accreditation-related documents that would permit them to conduct accreditation of counseling programs (CACREP, 2022). As a result, ACES and ACA (which was APGA at the

time) established CACREP (CACREP, 2022). The goal of CACREP is "(a) to provide review guidelines that reflect the profession's expectations, (b) to promote professional quality, and (c) to strengthen the profession's credibility (Adams, 2006, p. 63; Bobby & Kandor, 1992). While there are non-accredited counseling programs, CACREP accredited over 906 master's and doctoral degree programs in counseling and its specialties (CACREP, 2022) and aims to standardize how individuals become counselors and counselor educators through education, training and development (Lu et al., 2018).

Vacc (1992) examined counselor educators' perceptions of CACREP standards and its relevance to counselor preparation. The study consisted of 102 participants (58 representative of CACREP accredited programs and 44 representatives of nonaccredited programs). The study posited that CACREP accreditation is valued by both CACREP accredited programs and non-CACREP accredited programs and that the CACREP standards are critical in counselor preparation. In alignment with the general benefits of accreditation, CACREP accreditation ensures that counseling programs "maintain a high-quality training and student outcomes" (Strear et al., 2019, p.3). This is inclusive of students' performances on the National Counselor Examination (NCE). Adams (2006) conducted a quantitative study utilizing ANOVA to differentiate between CACREP and non-CACREP test taker scores on the NCE. The study was a five-year study that resulted in statistical significance (p=.000) indicating that students from CACREP programs scored higher on the NCE than students from non-CACREP programs. Conclusively, CACREP research concludes that programs with successful accreditation demonstrate a higher level of competence and commit less ethical violations (Even & Robinson, 2013). Along with these results, the benefits of a program being CACREP accredited and aligned with its standards includes but is not limited to an increase in job opportunities and internships

for students and graduates, improvement in student achievement quality, and increased publications of faculty and students (Mascari & Weber, 2013).

Challenges of Counselor Education Programs Adherence to CACREP

In reference to counseling at the doctoral level, the counselor education and supervision program is the only counseling doctoral program accredited by CACREP (Lu et al., 2018). However, there are accredited counselor education and supervision doctoral programs that have rehabilitation as a specialty. According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2018), CACREP is the largest accrediting body for doctoral programs in counselor education. The 2018 CACREP Annual Report showed that there were 85 doctoral level counselor education and supervision programs, 2,917 students enrolled, and 479 graduates, which is an increase in all three areas (CACREP, 2018). The ultimate goal of CACREP accredited doctoral programs is to not only prepare future counselor educators for counseling education, but to also serve as advocates for the counseling profession throughout counseling settings (Urofsky, Bobby & Ritchie, 2013). The CACREP accreditation is meant to measure the quality of a counseling doctoral program (Eissenstat & Bohecker, 2018) and hold the program accountable for maintaining and demonstrating the outlined standards and ensuring that programs prepare students to be competent, participate in transformative learning, and develop their professional identity (Person et al., 2020).The results of CACREP standards are documented through student learning outcomes (SLOs) and post-graduation outcomes (Bardo, 2009).

As it relates to this study, outlined in section 1:K of the 2016 CACREP standards, CACREP states that it is the responsibility of "*the academic unit to make continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community*" (CACREP, 2016). However, the limited current

research surrounding and describing the lived experiences of African American doctoral students suggest that African American students experience the contrary. Studies show that African American students feel a lack of support (Haskins et al., 2013), isolated (Henfield et al., 2013), racism and discrimination (Green et al., 2017), marginalization (Felder & Barker, 2013), racial aggressions (Gildersleeve et al., 2011), racial stereotypes (Williams et al., 2020) and much more. In addition, African American students also reported that some of their feelings of lack of inclusivity, uncomfortableness, and lack of connection to the university resulted from the lack of representation in faculty (Henfield et al., 2013; Seward, 2019; Zeligman, 2015) which is also addressed in section 1:Q of the 2016 CACREP standards. This standard states that "the academic unit should make continuous and systematic efforts to recruit, employ, and retain a diverse faculty to create and support an inclusive learning community." However, the lack of an inclusive learning community is displayed in the CACREP 2017 Vital Statistics which reports that only 14.52% of full-time faculty identify as African American (CACREP, 2017). In addition, the results from the Henfield et al. (2013) study found that participants reported that they not only felt underrepresented within the student community but also felt very underrepresented by the demographics within the faculty. This underrepresentation contributed to students feeling isolated and uncomfortable.

Within the counseling field, racial/ethnic matching is commonly researched. Researchers that have studied racial/ethnic matching have typically found that racial/ethnic minority clients prefer a therapist that is of the same race/ethnicity (Cabral & Smith, 2011; Swift et al., 2015). In alignment, research shows that students of color also appreciate faculty that are representative of their cultural background and ethnicity (Foxx et al., 2018). Baker and Moore (2015) explored the experiences of 19 racially and/or ethnically underrepresented doctoral students in counselor education and six major themes were identified. One of the themes that emerged was support. A

few participants reported that they experienced a lack of support and felt more connected to faculty of color who could support their experiences of being a person of color in the program. In regard to student recruitment, Ponterotto et al. (1995) conducted an extension study, to determine the challenges in Black and Hispanic American students' review and evaluation of program packets in professional psychology. The sample size, n=22, consisted of interested doctoral students in counseling or school psychology. The study identified both major and minor themes, however, a major theme that emerged was demography of the student body (Ponterotto et al., 1995). Approximately half (50%) of the participants from the study noted that they would be deterred from applying to a school that lacked adequate racial minority representation.

Holcomb-McCoy and Bradley (2003) surveyed 73 CACREP accredited counselor education programs and found that 38 (52%) of the CACREP accredited programs did not utilize specific strategies to recruit minority faculty to their program. Thus, proving the significance of intentionality, priority, and planning surrounding the recruitment and retaining of both diverse students and faculty members. The low numbers in recruitment and retention of African American counselor education faculty speaks volumes regarding the need for diversity and inclusion. However, the lack of specific guidelines provided to meet standards such as CACREP's standard 1:K can add a challenging layer and highly suggest that counselor education programs would find benefit in examining the experiences of Black doctoral students, their perception of their institution addressing the CACREP standard 1:K, and the ways in which their institution is addressing the unique needs of Black doctoral students.

CACREP Self-Study

The CACREP self-study is a product that is a part of the CACREP accreditation process. The CACREP self-study is the initial step in the accreditation process and is inclusive of programs reviewing and reflecting on how their program addresses the current CACREP

standards. During the analysis phase of the CACREP self-study, programs should pinpoint areas that present challenges and or concerns and target those specific areas. Understanding each of the current CACREP standards is critical to ensuring that the CACREP self-study is analyzed and reviewed effectively.

The CACREP self-study involves all application materials for and explanations for how each CACREP standard is being met by the program. Many times, the CACREP self-study is organized by the sections of the CACREP standards. These sections are inclusive of: Section I- The Learning Environment, Section II- Professional Identity, Section III- Professional Practice, and Section IV- Evaluation of the Program. For the purpose of this study, Section 1- The Learning Environment, specifically highlights how programs are meeting Standard 1:K. While programs are asked to provide a detailed description and evidence of how they are meeting this standard in order to attain accreditation, the findings of this study show that the perspectives of Black doctoral students and accredited programs need to be further investigated. Thus, the need for this study is to identify African American doctoral students' specific needs from their perspective and address the students' perspectives of how their programs are meeting and addressing those needs. The proposed solution to address this challenge is to add a qualitative survey addendum to the CACREP self-study that programs utilize to gain accreditation. This survey addendum will ensure that the experiences of Black doctoral students are represented in the most genuine way and their voices are heard. Literature has shown that addendums have been useful for further evaluation of programs and are typically utilized as an accompaniment to an original evaluation tool. In 2002, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) created an addendum to their original report on teacher preparation (Wilson & Floden, 2003). The addendum was inclusive of new questions that are posed to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs (Wilson & Floden, 2003).

Summary

In summation, there is additional research needed on how programs and institutions can meet the perceived needs of Black doctoral students as it is aligned with the CACREP 1:K standard. In addition, there is limited research that utilizes a BlackCrit theoretical framework which is imperative for ensuring that the voices of the participants are amplified and shared in a manner that is honest and straightforward. The significance and "so what" of this study is to provide counselor educators, counseling programs, and the counselor education field of how to address and navigate systems such as the CACREP standard 1:K, which will ultimately inform counselor education programs and impact classroom faculty on how to best meet the needs of African American doctoral students. The continued investigation of African American doctoral students' lived experiences and perspectives of their programs meeting their needs and CACREP standard is warranted so that their stories are illuminated, and paradigm shifts are implemented to improve counselor educator programs for African American students. This chapter reviewed the literature and provided an in-depth overview of (a) the theoretical framework that will be utilized, (b) CACREP programs and accreditation, (c)African American students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), the (d) historical perspective of African Americans in counselor education doctoral programs and (e) the diverse needs of African American doctoral students in CACREP programs. The literature that was discussed in this chapter spoke to the proposed research and provided literature base details of the constructs of this study. The literature presented shows that this study is needed to provide an integrative look at the experiences of African American doctoral students, their perspectives of their program meeting the CACREP standard 1:K and doctoral students' perspective of their specific needs for navigating their doctoral program. There is a need for current data and exploration regarding the topic and research that utilizes a critical phenomenological methodology and a BlackCrit

theoretical framework. This research study will better inform and provide a solution for counselor educators, counseling education programs, the CACREP standards, and the profession as a whole. The subsequent chapter provides the proposed methodology of this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at PWIs. From a critical phenomenological research approach, the primary researcher aims to extensively describe both the individual and collective experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Hays & Singh, 2012). The data collected from this study will provide implications for CACREP and counselor education programs to better understand the perspectives of their African American students, their needs, and how historically "white spaces" can impact or influence the educational experience of African American doctoral students in counselor education programs. In addition to counselor educators, counseling programs and the counselor education field as whole understanding the needs of Black doctoral students and those needs align with CACREP standard 1:K, this study provides counselor educators, counseling programs, and the counselor education field of how to address and navigate systems such as the CACREP standard 1:K, which ultimately informs counselor education programs and counselor education faculty on how to best meet the needs of African American doctoral students. Based on the findings from this study, a proposed solution will be to introduce an addendum to the CACREP self-study protocol to ensure the experiences of Black doctoral students are represented in the most genuine way.

Research Questions

This study aimed to address three questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at predominately white institutions?
2. What are African American doctoral students' perceptions of their institution meeting CACREP standard Section 1K: *"The academic unit makes continuous and systematic*

efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community?"

3. In what ways are institutions addressing the unique needs of African American doctoral students in CACREP counselor education programs at predominantly white institutions?

Positionality Statement

As a thirty-two-year-old, African American doctoral student at a predominately white institution in the United States, the primary researcher has experienced race-based stereotypes, racial comments, and microaggressions throughout her tenure in the doctoral program. In addition, the primary researcher has also had negative and racist experiences outside of academia. Like the voice of the participants, the primary researcher was groomed to always strive for the best, be the best, and work twice as hard as white counterparts. The primary researcher was transparent in her worldview and stance on being hypervigilant to microaggressions, racism and prejudice in spaces that are dominated by whites and where she was the only African American or one of a few. The primary researcher was aware that her necessity to be hypervigilant can serve as both a modality of protection and a means of hindrance. Moreover, the primary researcher acknowledges the potential to miss statements due to the primary researcher's position as a doctoral student.

In alignment with BlackCrit, the researcher utilized the qualitative method and the BlackCrit framework to provide a different perspective. In an effort to provide space for this different perspective to be articulated, it was necessary that this research created a "new way" of thinking about research evidence in a study (Zu & Storr, 2012). This "new way" was culturally sensitive and aware when collecting and analyzing the data.

The primary researcher was aware of her dual position in this study as she served as both the researcher and a member of the population. Due to this duality in position, bracketing was

utilized during the implementation of the phenomenological research to mitigate any potential harm or researcher bias that may tarnish or contaminate the research process. The process of bracketing is when the researcher acknowledges their biases and assumptions that are associated with the topic being researched. By acknowledging these biases and assumptions, the researcher was able to have an open and unbiased approach when interpreting data and experiences. In addition, the primary researcher participated in reflexive journaling throughout the study. The purpose of reflexive journaling is to reduce harm and will serve as a continuous "personal check in" for the researcher to organize thoughts, feelings, emotions, and opinions to minimize any research bias.

The primary researcher's position and sensitivity to this research provided both constructive and unfavorable outcomes (Hayes & Singh, 2012). From a constructive perspective, the researcher's ability to connect and understand the participants of this study provided additional depth due to the researchers' ability to "read the room" of the participants by understanding cultural social cues and idioms and participants' potential level of added comfort due to being able to identify with the researcher.

Research Design

Phenomenological Research

Phenomenology is utilized consistently amongst the social and health sciences, inclusive of counseling (Moustakas, 1994; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013; Haskins et al., 2013; Michael et al., 2015; Holm et al., 2015; Sackett & Lawson, 2016). To best understand, examine, and describe the experiences of participants, the phenomenological qualitative research method is one of the approaches utilized (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology is intentional about questioning the norm or "natural attitudes" that many people miss because they have been normed or appear obvious (Vagle, 2018, p. 13). This creates a space for others to see what has been normed or appear

obvious in a different light with a different perspective. Phenomenology's purpose is to gain a better understanding of one's everyday lived experiences (Vagle, 2018) that focuses on the here and now (Patton, 2015) and allows the researcher to learn from the participants (Jangha et al., 2018). Deriving from the German word *erlebnis*, the term lived experiences means "experience as we live through it and recognize it as a particular type of experience" (Patton, 2015, p. 115). Phenomenology positions the researcher to be able to articulate the relationship between who an individual is and the understanding of their experience (Weiss et al., 2020). That in mind, "phenomenology points us in a critical direction" (Weiss et al., 2020, p. 12).

Critical Phenomenological

As the primary researcher, the goal was to examine the insights and experiences of the participants and how they perceive and understand the phenomenon in their world. This study specifically utilized a critical phenomenological design which focused more on anti-Black racism and revealed the conjectures that shape ethical and political concerns (Weiss et al. 2020). In an effort to "generate new possibilities for meaningful experiences and existence" (Weiss et al, 2020, p.15) this study utilized semi-structured interviews that were conducted by the primary researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The critical phenomenological design, inclusive of BlackCrit utilized interviews due to its strong philosophical foundation (Creswell, 2014). These interviews aimed to capture the participants' individual experiences (Creswell, 2007) and to reveal the "essence" of the phenomenon through a "systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structure, of lived experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p.10). The critical phenomenological approach is transcendental in its social structures (Weiss et al., 2020) and is less focused on the interpretations from the research but emphasizes the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Critical phenomenology posits that its purpose is not to unmask what is previously hidden but to loudly make visible what is already evident that others

may choose to not see. An example of this is by emphasizing how systems within education are organized to benefit a specific group (Merriam, 2009). Through the critical phenomenological method, this study aimed to illuminate and tell the story of the lived experiences of African American doctoral students at predominantly white institutions in CACREP accredited counseling programs.

BlackCrit Theoretical Framework

BlackCrit developed as a response to Critical Race Theory (CRT). BlackCrit was utilized to address the social context and institutionalized racism that Black doctoral students experience in their counselor education programs and aimed to amplify the voices and explore the lived experiences of Black doctoral experiences in counselor education programs through their lens and their perspective as a Black individual. Utilizing a more critical theorization of Blackness (Dumas & Ross, 2016) and how antiblackness impacted their lived experiences (Wilderson, 2010), BlackCrit was utilized in the data analysis process by providing an explicit and unfiltered analysis of the participants' lived experiences.

Participants

All participants in this study were self-identified as African American or Black and were full-time doctoral students in a CACREP accredited counselor education program or a recent doctoral graduate. The participants attended classes in a traditional setting (in person) and their institution was classified as a PWI or HWI. In reference to the exclusion criteria pertaining to participants who attend classes in person, this decision was made to not only ensure consistency among the participants. According to Villancourt et al. (2021), their study showed that in-person learning appeared to help students feel as if they mattered.

Participants were required to meet all selection criteria to participate in the study. Participants were recruited via multiple methods such as purposeful sampling and snowball

sampling, outlined in the subsequent section. The researcher anticipated extending an invitation to 10 participants upon receiving approval from her institutional review board. Moreover, it was important that the data be rich in nature and provide inclusive data. The researcher allowed the phenomenon to guide this study to ensure there were enough participants to obtain such rich data (Vagle, 2018).

Sampling and Recruitment

To recruit qualified participants for this study, the researcher utilized two recruitment methods. The first method was purposeful sampling (Ravitch & Carl, 2019) via advertisement through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter. Recruitment advertisements were also posted in virtual counselor groups. The researcher obtained permission from administrators of any virtual social groups prior to posting recruitment material. The second modality of recruitment was purposeful snowball sampling. This sampling included the researcher contacting potential participants via email that had been identified or recommended by other participants that were deemed eligible to participate in the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Kruger & Casey, 2015).

Once participants expressed interest in the study, identified participants were sent a recruitment email with information regarding the purpose of the study, the intentions and benefits of the study, the procedures of the study, and any potential risks that an individual may incur while participating in the study. The recruitment email included a hyperlink to a Qualtrics form that provided the informed consent for their review, a short questionnaire regarding their eligibility status, designated space for them to create their pseudonym for privacy and confidentiality purposes and a designated space for them to indicate their consent of the study. Once participants completed the Qualtrics form and were deemed eligible to participate in the study, they received an email to gather information regarding the best time for them to meet for

the semi-structured interview. For privacy and confidentiality purposes, participants were instructed to choose a pseudonym to be used throughout their interview. Once participants confirmed their virtual interview time with the researcher, a confirmation email, including a Zoom link, was sent to their preferred email address. Participants did not receive a copy of the questions prior to the interview to capture participants' visceral and most authentic responses. However, after some reflection, there may have been some additional benefits to providing participants with the question prior to the interview. These benefits include but are not limited to providing the participant an opportunity to reflect on their experiences. At the semi structured interview, participants and the researcher reviewed the informed consent in detail again, and the researcher verified that the participant signed the electronic informed consent.

There were 15 participants who agreed to be a part of the study and completed the Qualtrics survey. All 15 participants were contacted via email with the expectation that all 15 would participate in the semi-structured interview, however, only 12 participants were involved in the semi-structured interviews. The goal was to recruit participants from various parts of the United States to have the most diverse sample. The goal was to also recruit both Black men and Black women participants to ensure gender diversity. Despite recruitment efforts, there were no participants from the west coast, however, there was representation from participants in the south, midwest, and east. In addition, in regard to gender, 66% percent of the participants identified as female and 34% identified as male.

Method

Using a critical phenomenological research design, interviews were utilized as the data collection method. Specifically, this study utilized semi-structured interviews to capture participants' lived experiences to better understand their perspectives (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) and collect richer data (Hays & Singh, 2012). The semi-structured interview provided an

"interview protocol" that was flexible for both the participant and the researcher, yet still provided structure (Hays & Singh, 2012, p.239). The subjective and non-evaluative nature of the semi-structured interview was meant to provide a safe space for participants and focused on the interview being person-centered (Ravitch & Carl, 2019); thus, ensuring that a non-judgmental environment was created. The semi-structured interview procedure has also been noted to be culturally appropriate (Esterberg, 2002).

Participant interviews were intended to be no longer than 60 minutes in duration, and incorporated rapport building and gaining trust between the researcher and the participant. This was very important as power differentials can become apparent between the researcher (interviewer) and the participant (interviewee) (Anyan, 2013). Known as social desirability bias (Bergen et al., 2019), the researcher wanted to also minimize the participant feeling the need to answer questions in a way that may be perceived as socially acceptable or what the researcher was expecting to hear. Ultimately, the researcher wanted the participant to feel as comfortable as possible in an effort to gain authentic data.

Data Collection Procedures

As previously mentioned, data was collected via semi-structured interviews (Ravitch & Karl, 2019). The primary researcher served as the interviewer, observer, and data analyst for this research study. Once potential participants were identified, the primary researcher sent potential participants an email that included the eligibility questionnaire, the consent form, and requested they select a pseudonym that would be utilized to address them throughout the study. Once participants confirmed the day of the interview, participants received a zoom link that served as the platform for conducting the interview. Prior to recording, participants and the researcher ensured that their pseudonym was listed and utilized as their name for the Zoom call. All participant interviews were recorded utilizing the secure Zoom network that is provided through

the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In addition to the primary researcher reviewing the consent, the interview procedures, and asking the participant if they agreed to be videoed, the participants were also prompted to agree to being recorded by Zoom before continuing with the zoom call.

Each interview varied in duration approximately thirty minutes to one hour. Once the interview was over, the recorded interview was automatically transcribed via the secure Zoom transcription service. The Zoom video recordings were deleted by the primary researcher immediately after the audio recording was complete and downloaded. The researcher listened to each audio recording in its entirety while following along with the provided Zoom transcript to ensure that transcription was accurate. The audio recordings were deleted once the transcription was reviewed by both the participant (member checking) and the researcher. To enhance trustworthiness, once the participant interview was complete, the researcher also engaged in memoing thoughts and feelings surrounding the interview session.

The interview questions in this study included preliminary demographic questions that asked the participant about their background such as their gender, age, and year in the program. In addition, the demographic questions asked about various identifiers of their program such as the race or ethnicity of their advisor and if they attended the same institution for their master's degree. The interview questions were a combination of opinion and value-based questions, knowledge questions, feelings questions, and probing questions. The opinion and value-based questions serve to gain an understanding of the participants' beliefs about their experiences as Black doctoral students in counselor education programs (Hays & Singh, 2012). The knowledge-based questions served to understand the number of faculty that identify as the participant, and the feeling questions served to better understand their feelings around their experiences and knowledge. Lastly, the probing questions were utilized to elicit additional data from participants

to gain a deeper understanding of their perspective (Hays & Singh, 2012). The interview questions utilized for this study can be found in Appendix D.

After all the twelve participant interviews were completed and the primary researcher had listened to the recordings to ensure that transcribing was accurate, the researcher then reviewed each transcript and removed any personal identifying information. Known as member checking, participants were sent a copy of their transcript to ensure that the transcripts captured their intended responses. Transcripts were sent to all participants and participants were allotted seven days to respond to the email with any changes they wanted to make. However, some participants confirmed the information was correct and others did not respond. None of the participants expressed any changes they felt should be made.

After the allotted seven days for participants to respond with any changes to their transcript, the primary research began to analyze the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data by "totally immersing themselves in the data," and aimed to see the perspectives of the participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 366). The primary researcher originally intended to utilize a linear, hierarchical approach to data analysis which consisted of building from bottom to top, through textural and structural descriptions, as is common with traditional phenomenology (Creswell, 2014). However, upon reviewing collected data, the researcher decided that interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) best met the needs of the theoretical and analysis frameworks as it pertains to this study. The decision to integrate IPA analysis methods was because IPA aims to "give voice to the concerns of the participants and make sense of their claims and concerns from a psychological perspective" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 102) which better aligns with critical phenomenology. IPA seeks to individualize the experiences of participants, which is imperative to critical phenomenology and hearing the voice

of each participant, and researchers are encouraged to "bring their diverse perspectives and content applications to the research process" utilizing IPA (Miller et al., 2018).

Utilizing the integrated IPA approach, the primary researcher immersed themselves in the data by reading each transcript as a single case (Smith et al., 2012) and creating detailed notes also known as memoing (Hays & Singh, 2012). The next step was to identify emergent themes for each transcript (or case) and extracting significant statements (Smith et al., 2012). This process was repeated for each case and was done utilizing open coding and hand coding each line (Hayes & Singh, 2012). Open coding and hand coding each line is when the researcher identifies concepts and divides the data into smaller parts that will label and describe conceptual pieces (Creswell, 2014). The primary researcher utilized personal notes and reflexive journaling that were completed during the semi structured interview process. Once open coding was completed, the primary researcher structured codes through structural and textural descriptions in an effort to reduce data into potential themes. Following, the research identified connections or repetitive themes across emergent themes/codes known as horizontalization (Creswell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994) or clustering and the data was then organized into summary sheets (Hays & Singh, 2012). The primary researcher reviewed the summary sheets and utilized thematic analysis to create any necessary subcodes/subthemes (Hays & Singh, 2012). Next, the codebook (Hays & Singh, 2012) was created. The primary researcher provided the research team member with the summary sheets and the draft codebook. The research team member reviewed both the summary sheets and the draft codebook to determine whether or not they agreed with the primary researcher's themes and subthemes and provided feedback. Once the research team member reviewed the summary sheets and codebook and returned the codebook to the primary researcher, the primary researcher incorporated the research team member's feedback and created a master table of themes (Smith et al., 2012).

Research Team

It is believed that utilizing a research team will reduce researcher bias and promote trustworthiness of the study because the primary researcher is serving in a dual role as both the researcher and a member of the community. In an effort to promote trustworthiness, the research team consisted of the primary researcher and one doctoral student that is also pursuing a doctoral degree in counselor education and supervision and is academically qualified to fulfill the responsibility of being on a qualitative research team. This doctoral student identifies as a Native American male and has experience reading transcriptions, analyzing statements, words and phrases and has a knowledge of how to implement the phenomenological approach to research. The intentionality behind the research team member identifying as a different race than the participants being interviewed was to strengthen the research analysis, reduce researcher bias, and provide an additional layer of trustworthiness.

The role of the primary researcher was to develop the interview questions, analyze the data and create the codebook. The doctoral student team member participated in peer debriefing which includes checking and interrogating the primary researcher's coding of transcriptions. The doctoral student also called attention to any biases or emotional reactions that the primary researcher may have had that potentially influenced the data analysis.

Trustworthiness

In this qualitative research study, the primary researcher will serve in the capacity of the instrument in collecting and analyzing the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The primary researcher identifies as an African American doctoral student that is in a CACREP accredited counselor education program. The following strategies were selected based on the identified criterion of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, conformability, and ethics (Hays & Singh, 2012). To obtain and maintain trustworthiness, the primary researcher engaged in reflexive journal writing

and memoing. Reflexive journal writing was utilized by the primary researcher to journal their thoughts, positions, biases, and or emotions that occurred through both the data collection and data analysis process with each interviewee/participant (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Reflexive journal writing also took place as needed. Memoing was utilized after data collection to further describe and analyze findings throughout the data collection process (Hays & Singh, 2012).

When analyzing and interpreting data, investigator triangulation and member checking was utilized. Investigator triangulation was utilized to determine if a consistency was similar with the primary researchers' findings (Campbell et. al, 2020) and this was completed with a doctoral student that served on the research team. To enhance trustworthiness, the primary researcher intentionally selected a research team member that did not identify as the same race as the participant, however, the research team member was knowledgeable about the qualitative research process and analysis. The process of member checking involved the participants reviewing interview transcriptions and any interpretations of meaning to ensure accuracy and validity (Hays & Singh, 2012) and if the participant felt a need to modify or alter any of their responses to the semi-interview questions.

In addition, the primary researcher maintained transparency through bracketing. Evidence of bracketing is shown in the subjectivity statement and was continued throughout the study. The goal of bracketing was to achieve phenomenological reduction by addressing one's pre-judgment and bringing their bias to the conscious (Vagle, 2018). Lastly, I utilized an audit trail to provide physical evidence of data collection and analysis procedures. This ensured that

Limitations

There were a few limitations of this study that may have impacted the study. Considering the researcher identified as an African American doctoral student there was potential for researcher bias. There was also potential for social desirability which meant that the participants

may have a desire to appease the interviewer, therefore impacting their responses. In addition, the researcher did not share the research questions with the participants to receive a visceral response, however, reflecting back, it may have been beneficial for participants to have had time to reflect on their experiences and consider their responses over time. Member checking was done to allow participants to edit or modify their responses, however, not every participant participated in this step.

Summary

Chapter three provided the methodology and the design of the research study. As mentioned, this study will not only fill the gap in the literature but will also provide implications for counselor education programs. The design of this study is critical phenomenological and consists of the utilization of the semi-structured interview method. The interview questions consist of questions that ask participants about their experiences in counselor education doctoral programs, where they found support, their interactions with faculty and peers/colleagues, challenges (if any) that African American counselor education doctoral students may face, and ways they felt changes could be made to improve their and other African American counselor education doctoral students' experiences. As the instrument of the study, the researcher participated in bracketing, member checking, triangulation, memoing, and kept an accurate audit trail to promote trustworthiness. Due to the intentionality associated with BlackCrit and critical phenomenology, the data was collected and analyzed by the primary researcher utilizing an integration of data analysis processes (Hays and Singh, 2012) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2012).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at PWIs, how their institution is meeting CACREP standard 1:K, and how their program addresses the unique needs of Black doctoral students. In addition, the purpose of this study was to provide CACREP, counselor educators, and counselor education programs with a solution that can be implemented to improve their programs and ensure that their Black doctoral students feel heard, valued, and respected. This research study aimed to answer the following three questions: 1) What are the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at predominately white institutions? 2) What are African American doctoral students' perceptions of their institution meeting CACREP standard Section 1K: *"The academic unit makes continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community?"* and 3) In what ways are institutions addressing the unique needs of African American doctoral students in CACREP counselor education programs at predominantly white institutions? The significance of this study is to contribute to the body of literature regarding the experiences of African American doctoral students in counselor education and provide implications for CACREP accredited counselor education programs. As previously mentioned, former studies have not utilized both the critical phenomenological methodology and BlackCrit theoretical framework to address Black doctoral students' experiences, how their programs are meeting the CACREP standard 1:K and how counselor education programs are directly addressing the unique needs of Black doctoral students. This chapter will provide a description of all twelve participants and will discuss the findings of the study. There were five themes and three subthemes that emerged from the data.

Participants

This study consisted of 12 participants that attended schools in various parts of the United States. All participants confirmed that their program was CACREP accredited and were either a Predominately White Institution (PWI) or a Historically White Institution (HWI). There were 4 participants from universities in the state of North Carolina, 4 participants from universities in the state of Texas, 1 participant from a university in the state of New Orleans, 1 participant from a university in the state of Florida, and 1 participant from a university in the state of Ohio. The participants ranged in age from 28 years old to 40 years old and there were 8 participants that identified as women and 4 participants that identified as male. There were 2 participants that were in their second year in their program, 4 participants that were in their third year of their program, 1 participant that was in their fourth year of their program, and 4 participants that had recently graduated and defended their dissertation in 2022. Three of the 2022 graduate participants currently work in academia as counselor educators. Lastly, there were 8 participants that reported that they did not receive their master's degrees at their current institution and 4 participants who reported that they attended the same institution for their masters and doctoral degrees.

Participant	Age	Gender	Same Institution	Year in Program
Taylor	37	Female	No	2023 Graduate
Sasha	40	Female	No	3rd year
Ty	28	Male	No	3rd year
Shay	32	Female	No	2022 Graduate
Chris	31	Female	Yes	2nd year

Javon	28	Female	Yes	2nd year
JaQuavius	33	Male	No	2022 Graduate
Brandon	28	Male	Yes	3rd year
Kerv	29	Male	No	3rd year
Halo	28	Female	Yes	2nd year
Camille	31	Female	No	2022 Graduate
Jaz	29	Female	No	2022 Graduate

Themes

The data of this study was analyzed in an extensive manner. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the data analysis was inclusive of multiple readings of transcripts, notes, and researcher memos and journaling. Based on the extensive analysis of the data, five themes emerged as a result of the twelve interviews. These five themes were: *Representation is Meaningful and Matters, White Faculty Not Providing Safe Spaces, Disingenuous and Performative Recruitment, Black Students Have Specific Needs.* The first theme, Representation is Meaningful and Matters, addressed all the research questions, however, the emerged theme spoke most to research questions 2 and 3. The first theme also consisted of one subtheme: “Find my People" which addressed research question 3. The second theme, *Faculty Not Providing Safe Spaces,* addressed all research questions, however, spoke most to research questions 1 and 2. The second theme also consisted of two subthemes: Black students' inability to be authentic and white fragility. These subthemes addressed research questions 1 and 2. The third theme, *Disingenuous and Performative Recruitment,* addressed all research questions, however, spoke most to research question 2. The fourth and final theme, *Black Students Have Specific Needs,* addressed all research questions, however, spoke most to research question 3. The fourth theme had one subtheme: “Push

Through" (Resiliency) and this subtheme primarily addressed research question 3. Found in Table 1 are the themes and subthemes and the percentages of participants that reported and or share sentiments regarding the theme. The concurrent section discusses an in-depth discussion regarding each theme and subtheme and is inclusive of excerpts of participants' voices from their respective transcripts. The excerpts of their voices are shared in accordance with their responses based on the given theme.

Table 1

Summary of Themes and Subthemes and Percentage of Report

Theme	**Subtheme**	**Percentage of Participants Reported Theme**
Representation is Meaningful and Matters		100%
	"Find My People"	100%
White Faculty Not Providing Safe Spaces		92%
	Black Students' Inability to be Authentic	100%
	White Fragility	92%
Disingenuous and Performative Recruitment		92%
Black Students Have Specific Needs		100%
	"Push Through" (resiliency)	100%

Representation is Meaningful and Matters

We have all heard the saying that representation matters. Ijoma et al., (2021) posits that "you can only aspire for what you see yourself in" is a common phrase utilized in academia across the United States (p. 353). This quote speaks to all participants' perspective that representation not only matters but it is also meaningful. The definition of "Representation is Meaningful and Matters" is participants' need to see other faculty of color, specifically Black faculty. In addition, participants want to see other Black doctoral students in their cohorts. Each participant mentioned that seeing themselves amongst colleagues and faculty was very important to them. The participants discussed that the ability to see themselves and be around those that share similar sentiments and experiences not only helps to create safe spaces but also promotes community and connection. Participant Shay mentioned that:

> "Representation matters. So, even just by their (Black faculty) presence, I knew I had options in terms of who to turn to."

Participant Halo shared how important and comforting it can be to have other Black colleagues. She also reflected on her experience as a master's student in her program to her experience as a doctoral student and how the representation of Black people within her doctoral cohort has given her a sense of safety compared to her master's program. Halo says:

> "I think having other Black people along the journey with me was very comforting. I could say within myself I felt a lot more confident to speak up about certain things, a lot more confident to confront and to challenge because I knew in certain regards I would be supported by Black peers. So, I questioned if I would still have that same feeling if I wasn't surrounded by other Blacks. When I think about my experience as a master's student, I was the only person who had a Black identity and I oftentimes felt extremely unsafe in those situations."

In addition to having a cohort and colleagues that share the Black identity, participants also shared how meaningful and important it was to have Black faculty within their program. Participant Ty spoke to the presence of Black faculty and the importance of how his program hiring a Black faculty member helped him:

> "We finally got a new faculty member that's an African American male and that has been somewhat of a corrective experience for me. Having a Black male faculty has been helpful when it comes to research and scholarship. So, learning how to find my voice without honestly sounding white or in a way kinda like code switching. So, how to get my point across and to meet standards for different journals has been helpful as well. As well as with other support like getting connected with other Black faculty on campus or opportunities with other black men and people in the surrounding area. That has been helpful with navigating the counselor world and academia."

Sharing a similar sentiment regarding the Black women, Javon shared:

> "The Black women faculty definitely are folks that I'm leaning into talk with almost every day and learn from. My experience wouldn't be the same without them. They are the ones who advocate for and with me to the highest capacity that they can. They advocate for me both inside and outside of the department."

Participant Chris also shared that having Black faculty was one of the things that helped her with remaining at her university and in her program. She also mentions that having Black faculty facilitates creating an inclusive environment.

Chris shared:

> "I think something that I feel was most helpful for me was having faculty of color. One of the things that helped me with my own retention was seeing and having and working with faculty of color. I think that was a big piece for me and why I had a bit of a smoother

navigation through my program because I felt like I could relate to them and confide in them or share with them things that I'm navigating and that would be validated and understood." "Having faculty of color is a very important piece of creating that inclusive teaching and learning environment. It's helpful when faculty highlight the identities we hold and experiences that are occurring as it relates to their own lived experiences."

Additionally, Participant Chris spoke about the importance of Black faculty representation to prospective students and how that representation can impact student retention. Chris stated:

"If we [Black Students] aren't seeing a lot of faculty of color, then how comfortable are students gonna feel enrolling or staying at that university or program. The question becomes, am I going to get the support I need and do I feel like I will be able to navigate this program as adequately as my white counterparts?"

While only a few of the participants' voices are highlighted with this theme, 100% of the participants mentioned the importance of having Black faculty and or colleagues in their programs. They all mentioned how this representation was meaningful, mattered, and valued and how it impacted their matriculation in their programs. Participants also mentioned their efforts to "Find their People" within their program. This desire was an additional layer of how Black faculty and colleague representation matters and why "Find My People" emerged as a subtheme.

"Find My People"

According to Maslow (1970) theories of hierarchical needs, Maslow posits that humans have five basic needs. These needs are organized in a hierarchical manner starting with physiological needs, followed by security, belongingness, esteem, and ending with self-actualization which is at the top of the pyramid (Maslow, 1970). In relation to this subtheme regarding connection, human connection falls under belongingness. Being able to connect with others is done when an individual feels seen, heard, understood, and valued. In addition, the

ability to connect with others also forms trust and provides a sense of belonging. A direct quote from some of the participants, “Find My People" is defined as the desire or need to seek out individuals that share similar or congruent characteristics such as race, experiences, and culture. The participants of this study spoke about how their desire to connect with their fellow Black colleagues and faculty was due to their shared experiences and the sense of safety around being with their “own people.” Participant Shay shared:

> “I don’t want it to be the case where all the Black people sit together in the cafeteria, but I did gravitate more towards the cohort members that look like me. Mainly because I felt safe. I also recognized very early which professors didn't feel safe.”

As it pertains to safety, many participants emphasized how attempting to connect with other colleagues and faculty that didn’t share the same sentiments as them was challenging. Participant Ty spoke about the challenges of connecting with colleagues and faculty that didn’t share similar sentiments and or experiences and how that experience can be isolating. Participants Ty said:

“Something that feels isolating is trying to connect with professors and colleagues who

> share similar identities as I do. This in itself is challenging because they aren't really available. For example, being in class and trying to connect to my peers and colleagues has been really interesting and challenging because we just don’t have similar experiences. It’s very important that I find people that are aligned to my ways of thinking and experiences.”

Participant Camille and Brandon shared similar sentiments and further emphasized the importance of “finding their people” and connecting. They both stated respectively:

> “It’s so important for me to find my people to connect with and find support. Finding my people helped me to feel comfortable with addressing shared problems and concerns as I went through the program.”

"A lot of times as Black students we have to find our own support and we do that by finding our people. Having that kind of peer support really means everything."

Participant Sasha spoke to how her and fellow Black colleagues have been able to share their experiences and support each through their connections. She said:

"We've [Black Colleagues] collaborated together and connected. I think of it as trauma bonding. We've experienced a lot together. So, I think we get our needs met just in some of the conversations that we have. But understanding, "I SEE YOU," I see what's happening and I'm willing to help you and support you in any way that I can is powerful."

The ability to connect with "your people" not only provides support but it also perpetuates resiliency. Participants Camille and Jas shared how their connection with "their people" gave them the support they needed to feel safe and persevere through their programs. Participant Camille said that the connection with other Black cohort members and faculty have provided her support both inside and outside of the classroom. Participant Camille stated:

"We've been able to connect and support each on campus and outside of the classroom because we have similar experiences and a similar mission. So being able to just connect and being very open and you know somewhat vulnerable with my peers has been beneficial."

Participant Jas spoke about her desire to remain in her program after turmoil and feeling as if she was mistreated was due to the strong connection, she felt she had with another Black woman in her cohort. Jas shared:

"There was another Black woman in my program, and I was not willing to be in the program without her and vice versa. Therefore, if she kept going, I kept going and vice versa. We made a decision to finish and graduate together and that's what kept me at my university."

While participants shared the importance of "finding their people" amongst colleagues and connecting with colleagues to find support, participants also shared how "finding their people" amongst faculty was a priority for them and how it helped to create a safe space for themselves. Sharing a similar sentiment of feeling safe, JaQuavius spoke about his intentionality behind only interacting with non-white faculty. JaQuavius stated:

> "After I had a horrible experience with a white faculty member, I was very intentional about only interacting with non-white faculty. That negative interaction with the white faculty member made it clear that I could really only fuck with the non-white people in the program. Had I not been in a program where I had access to faculty of color, my second half of my doctoral experience would have been really bad."

In addition to feeling safe with Black faculty, participants shared that they felt a better connection and they felt seen and better understood by Black faculty which resulted in deeper and more meaningful connections. Participant Brandon shared his experience with the only Black faculty member from his university. He shared:

> "With the one Black woman on faculty, even though she was a woman, I feel like we connected more than anybody else in the program because she can relate to the Black community what it feels like to be Black in academia."

Similarly, Participant Ty shared:

> "Despite the scarcity of Black faculty available, the professors that I do have a close connection to are professors of color. They've mostly had similar experiences where I can feel validated, and I leave feeling seen and heard."

As stated earlier, seeing yourself among peers, colleagues, and faculty is very important. Every participant emphasized the importance of representation and how it was meaningful, and it mattered. Participants felt a greater connection when they were able to work with people that

looked like them and were able to converse with people that shared similar identities, interests and experiences. This level of connection created safe spaces for the participants and created a space that allowed participants to freely share their racial trauma and other race-based experiences. Participants also shared their feelings of belongingness which also created a space of safety. Participants mentioned that being seen, heard and valued was one of the things that facilitated their ability to navigate their journey with ease. Being able to "Find their People" amongst colleagues and faculty was necessary and imperative.

White Faculty Not Providing Safe and Supportive Spaces

According to the Council of Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standard 1:K that states, "*programs must make systematic ways to attract, recruit, and retain diverse students and create an inclusive learning environment."* When participants were asked how they felt about their program meeting this standard as it pertains to "creating an inclusive learning environment, 92% of the participants stated that there was one or more white faculty within their program that made them feel unsafe, isolated, and unsupported. In alignment with the Black Critical (BlackCrit) Theoretical Framework, BlackCrit is utilized in this study to provide a deeper understanding of Blacks and their experiences. BlackCrit provides a space for Blacks to share their experiences and own them as truth without the need for doubt or proof of their experiences or racial claims. BlackCrit aims to address how anti-Blackness enables institutionalized systems and practices and the impact this can have on the lives of Blacks doctoral students. That said, this theme is defined and described as the perspectives of the participants and how they felt faculty within their program created and provided safe and supportive spaces.

As many of the participants shared their sentiments around their programs retention efforts and creating inclusive learning environments, participants shared their experiences with

faculty, the feelings of being unsafe and the inability to be authentically themselves due to white authority and fear of repercussions and also shared their experiences with white faculty and white fragility. Both inability to be authentic and white fragility emerged as subthemes. Shared below are excerpts from the participants recalling negative experiences they had with white faculty members and how those negative experiences affected the way that they showed up in their classes and throughout the programs. Participants also shared the impact unsafe spaces had on them and some of their colleagues.

Taylor, Camille, and Sasha expressed how the professors failed to create a sense of community and how the professors contributed their feelings of being unsafe within the classroom and the program. Taylor stated:

"It's been really hard. There was not a lot of connection with professors, primarily those that were not Black. There was also no sense of community or safety from the professors."

Camille shared:

> "Going through the program has been an adjustment and has been pretty difficult. I was consistently trying to adjust to this idea of asking for help in an unsafe space."

Shay shared about how she also had to question the intentions behind white faculty's comments or remarks. She stated:

> "There were moments when I had to sit back and either reevaluate a particular conversation or interaction, an email or a statement made by a faculty member, just to make sure I was reading it correctly. I have to consistently question intent and like when I walk away that interaction felt icky, or whatever you said just didn't sit right, or settle within me with the professors that were unsafe. I just need to say it plainly, the fact is that they gave me racist vibes."

Sharing similar sentiments Sasha:

"Overall, it's been just taxing for the last two and a half years, to the point where I didn't feel safe and didn't feel comfortable talking to professors. I definitely did not feel safe with certain professors by myself. Mainly because of negative interactions with particular faculty and just not feeling supported overall."

In addition to the women participants, Black male participants of the study spoke about feeling isolated as the only or one of a few Black males in their programs. This isolation also perpetuated their feelings of being unsafe around white faculty. Kerv said:

"Being the only Black male can be very isolating."

In the same sentiment, Ty stated:

"For the most part it has been isolating as I identify as an African American male. There's not many students in the doctoral program or past cohorts and I am currently the only male."

JaQuavius stated:

"My overall experience was eye-opening. Honestly, I think if I had to put it in one word, I would say it was eye-opening. It definitely kind of prepared me for some of the things I would encounter as a Black man in academia. Feelings of being unsafe around white faculty in counseling and academia doesn't stop after you graduate. Especially if you work in academia."

Black Doctoral Students' Inability to Authentic

Being able to be authentic and show up unapologetic about who you are and your intersecting identities can be challenging for African Americans. Many African Americans are taught to "code switch" in an effort to perform or conform with the deemed "appropriate" behavior for that particular environment (McCluney et al., 2019). As with many other things that

are relevant to Blacks and Black culture, code switching is something that has been co-opted by whites to describe how they feel the need to switch between who they are at work and who they are at home. However, the two are not synonymous and BlackCrit would stress the need for Blacks to "code switch" due to anti-Blackness and the fear of being unaccepted due to their racial identity. When whites feel the need to switch between who they are at home and who they are at work, it is to uphold a standard of professionalism not in fear of being see as "too white," "too angry," "too aggressive," or any other stereotype that is placed on Blacks. The goal and premise of "code switching" is for Blacks to appease an intended audience (typically white people) so that they do not associate or group them with an assumed stereotype that is primarily associated with Black people. The participants of this study share their sentiments around the feelings of being unable to show up authentically. This theme is defined as shared feelings and perspectives of the participants in regard to the challenges or fears around showing up as themselves or feeling the need to "downplay" or alter the way they speak, respond, carry themselves, etcetera. This subtheme is directly to Black doctoral students feeling unsafe in spaces with white faculty.

When participants were asked to name challenges they faced throughout their program, 100% of the participants shared sentiments around the inability to be authentic or be themselves. The participants shared their feelings of fear or concern regarding speaking up, finding their voice or a desire to overcompensate to ensure that they "measured up" to their peers. Chris reflected on how her perfectionism or imposter syndrome was a direct result of her feelings of having to overcompensate so she would not be stereotyped or grouped into a specific category that many Black students are assigned to by whites. She shared:

"I have reflected on where my perfectionism is coming in or the imposter syndrome is

> coming in and how all of that is starting to come to play. Throughout my experiences, some challenges that came up for me was that I am equating myself to my white counterparts. This belief that I have to go 10 times harder with what I'm doing or work 10 times harder just to break even and then still questioning even if that is enough….it's exhausting. I want white faculty to see me in the same light they see them!"

Chris also went on to share about the feelings of intimidation by white faculty and how those feelings impact how she shows up. She says:

> "There are moments when I feel very intimidated, especially with white professors or white faculty. I am constantly wondering how they are perceiving me and how I am showing up in the classroom."

Sharing a similar sentiment, Sasha shared about her feelings of showing up authentically and being responsible for gatekeeping concurrently. She stated:

> "One of the biggest challenges I have is showing up authentically. Showing up authentically but also being responsible for gatekeeping is a real challenge.
>
> There are many professors that should have been gate kept or reported and something should have been done. But it doesn't happen and for me the retaliation against me speaking up is what I fear."

The male participants of the study also shared their experiences and feelings of the inability to show up authentically. They also shared how their intersecting identities of being Black and male impacted their ability to show up. Both Ty and Brandon spoke about code switching and presenting a certain way to white faculty. They said:

Ty:

> "Learning to find my voice without sounding like or feeling the need to code switch is challenging."

Ty also stated:

> "I felt like some the professors didn't know how to be in a relationship with me as a Black male. I honestly feel as if they hadn't experienced many Black males, specifically working with and supporting Black male students. Many of them [white faculty] were apprehensive to speak to me and when I would ask questions, I always felt as if I received a cold vibe."

Brandon:

> "Being a Black male and a doctoral student in this kind of position, you kind of feel powerless at times and are afraid to speak up. I feel like as a Black person, I personally have to present a specific way as I approach faculty to not come off too overbearing or angry. I feel like I have to shift my tone a bit for them to like fully absorb what I'm trying to say or express or further help me."

In addition, Kerv spoke about how his stature and confident demeanor was seen as a threat. Combined with his intersecting identities of being Black and male, he consistently had to be aware of how he showed up in spaces. Additionally, he shared experiences of other Black men that lingers in his mind when he is working with white women specifically. Kerv shared:

Kerv:

> "Being a Black male who is muscular and confident in his identity has made people uncomfortable, particularly white women. I am always mindful of how I navigate myself because I'm always in an environment where I'm the Black male with majority white women and consistently feel threatened. I have seen four Black men go to prison because a white woman claimed rape and she eventually confessed thatt she was lying, but the four Black men went to jail and were freed after losing a year of their life. So for me it's

> always a very interesting dynamic to navigate and I am very thoughtful how I navigate those relationships."

Like Kerv, the participants spoke about how the experiences of Blacks in America have impacted how they show up. As Kerv spoke about the Black men that were wrongly accused and imprisoned, Brandon and Camille also spoke about their challenges around navigating how they felt they had to show up during racial unrest and challenges. Brandon said:

> "Being at a PWI during George Floyd was extremely challenging. We were expected to continue our days as scheduled and show up without being given the space to process. We were expected to show up for our classes, clients, and attend to our work as if nothing happened and we weren't angry. I felt like I had a mask that I had to slide white with my colleagues and faculty. I legit couldn't just be myself."

Similarly, Camille stated:

> "It was hella hard to just show up to class when it felt like weekly Black men and women were being killed by cops. It was like professors legit expected us to show up like we were okay and things were all good. I felt like I had to suppress how I was really feeling. It's like white faculty tried to ignore the world was on fire and we as Black students weren't affected by what was going on."

Camille's sentiment that white faculty ignored what was going on and the combined feelings of participants feeling the need to "mask" their feelings and or identities also alludes to the next subtheme of White Fragility.

White Fragility

Coined by DiAngelo (2011), white fragility describes the responses white people have or experience due to racial issues. Due to their identity and privilege, white people have been protected from racial stress. Because of this protection, it is not uncommon for white people to

become defensive, angered, sad, etc., when having to discuss racial inequities, racial trauma, or racial injustice. In alignment with the definition provided by DiAngelo (2011), the subtheme "white fragility" is defined as the participants' experiences with have professors that did not address racial comments and issues that arose in the classroom setting and those white professors that ignored or refused to acknowledge racial trauma, discrimination or other racial challenges that Black students/people were experiencing.

When participants were asked about their experiences with faculty in their program, many participants spoke about white faculty avoiding conversations around racial trauma and only offering "white versions" of counseling. Sasha shared:

> "Everything has been reframed, so we don't wanna talk about racial trauma, let's talk about multiculturalism, and things that are more soothing and 'appropriate' to whites."

Brandon sharing a similar sentiment shared:

> "I have had professors who have been kinda nasty and only want to give me the white male version of counseling. We have some professors who run away from the conversation [regarding multiculturalism and social justice] when we are supposed to all be ready to talk about whatever and whoever, because we are all aiming to be culturally competent. But that's clearly not happening."

Camille also spoke about her experience with white faculty and their competence in multiculturalism. She stated:

> "I just think a big piece of it is their knowledge and competence and what this looks like in real life in real time. Multicultural and social justices mostly feel like me trying to always just apply things on my own because they [faculty] aren't necessarily competent in that. They truly just don't know how to navigate it and what to put in place."

In addition to white faculty's cultural incompetence and avoidance of racial conversations, 92% of the participants shared challenging racial experiences they had with white faculty. Sasha and Jas spoke about how they felt they were targeted by white professors due to their racial identity: Sasha said:

> "There was a professor that would purposely diminish or devalue racism or say that it didn't exist. They would bring up a lot of touchy and triggering statements about Blacks and the Black community. They made harsh political statements in class or in other communities where they knew we [Black people] were present. Even if it was not relevant to subject matter they would blatantly target myself and others that looked like me to speak on the issues they were discussing if I didn't want to. Nothing was done about this and this professor still teaches."

Sasha also included:

> "I feel like I've been targeted by professors. I have been isolated from professors, I've even been discriminated against by professors. It's been really troublesome and very problematic as a Black student."

Sharing the same sentiment Jas stated:

> "The other Black woman in my cohort and I quickly became "threats" and the faculty felt that they needed to keep an eye on us and make sure that were not sharing our voices as much. It was a very condensing and micromanaged experience."

Both Brandon and Shay spoke about how they felt they were treated unfairly due to their racial identity. Brandon shared:

> "There have been times where I've had professors who I thought was being unfair and showing some signs of racism depending on how they would respond to me and the other Black students in the classroom. It was also apparent in how and when they responded to

> emails or questions that we may have had. I felt that sometimes white professors were less patient with the Black students and sometimes intimidated by their voices or perspectives. I also noticed how some white professors responded when Black students would articulate a point very well. They would act surprised as if a Black person shouldn't be able to respond so professionally and well thought out."

Brandon also stated:

> "It's like why am I not being treated fair? If I am not comfortable in a situation, I'm gonna speak up on it. And I think that kind of threatened the white faculty because they feel like Black people are aggressive, angry or we are threats. Especially, Black males."

Shay, recalled her encounter with a professor regarding an unfair grade on assignment:

> "I remember having an encounter with a professor who wasn't clear about expectations regarding an assignment. When I turned in my assignment, I was the only one of my classmates that received consistent negative feedback. When I asked her where I missed the mark, she was vague and stated that it just didn't meet her expectations or the quality of work she expects from a student. It was clear to me that she was operating out of her power and privilege."

Similarly, Taylor also spoke about a white faculty member that operated out of privilege and asked her to do something that was not only outside of her job description but also very inappropriate. Taylor shared:

> "I had white faculty member who I was working for as a research assistant. I was told that my duties would be inclusive of writing and reviewing literature reviews, articles, and the potential to publish with said advisor. These duties and the potential opportunity made this position more appealing to me despite the minimal pay. However, one of the things she asked me to do was to babysit her children so that she could go to a meeting.

> She tried to say that it was a part of job description as her research assistant. However, I said that I was not willing to do it because I was concerned about how that would have been perceived by my colleagues and that I did not want my degree to be in jeopardy if something happened to her kids on my watch. The liability and risks were too high. After I set this boundary with her, our relationship definitely took a shift and I never received an opportunity to publish."

Along with experiencing challenges directly from white faculty, participants also spoke about their experiences with white colleagues making inappropriate comments and displaying racial aggression. The participants emphasized their dissatisfaction with white faculty allowing it to happen and not properly addressing it when it happens. JaQuavius shared an incident that happened in one of his classes, he says:

> "There was an incident where my classmate felt offended by a question I asked in class and came back later and cried about it in front of the class. She also attacked me and said that she would hate for me to be her practicum instructor. The situation continued to escalate and the professor at the time was also white and they just allowed it happen. It took a non-white person to be very supportive."

Brandon also shared an experience that occurred in one of his classes where the white faculty member allowed the white colleague to be disrespectful to him. He said:

> "So in internship we watch videos and give each other feedback. A white male student quickly became offended when I offered feedback. It was clear that he was just being combative, however, the professor pretty much just let it happen."

Taylor spoke about how the Black students came forward to the department to discuss how white professors were not addressing inappropriate comments in the classroom. She shared:

> "After the death of George Floyd, a lot of our Black students really came forward and talked about how our specific department was teaching about social justice but wasn't living it. They also talked about how professors were like not addressing inappropriate comments that were being made by students within classes. It's my understanding that conversations happened, however, it's clear that professors were still letting things slide or sweeping them under the rug."

Similarly to Taylor's experience with nothing truly being done about professors not addressing inappropriate comments, participants shared that they felt their program did not do a lot in the realm of retaining students. 92% of the participants shared that their reasoning for staying on the program had less to do with the program and more about their desire to stay and resiliency to finish their doctorate. Ty said:

> "I am confident that the reason why me and the other Black people stay in my program has nothing to do with the program and their retention efforts. That's solely because we want to finish this degree and we aren't going to allow them to stop us."

Javon said:

> "I'm not even sure what their retention efforts are. But as for me, I align myself with the Black faculty in my program and they keep me motivated and grounded to finish."

Sasha:

> "I don't even think they care if we stay or not. I honestly just keep my head down and do what I need to do to graduate."

When the participants were asked about retention efforts from their program, participants also shared that either they or their Black colleagues felt marginalized and devalued and experienced microaggressions. Participant Sasha stated:

> "There's been several times that myself and other minority students have threatened to

> quit the program due to some of the experiences that we've encountered during the program. The chair and those in leadership within the department kind of ignore or sweep the issues that we state under the rug and it's not valued."

Javon shared:

> "So I think a couple students actually left the program because they were marginalized. They were Black and Latina. They were experiencing microaggressions from faculty."

In alignment with the participants' feelings regarding their programs retention efforts, many of the participants also shared that they felt their program was "performative" when it came to attracting, enrolling, and creating inclusive and safe learning spaces for Black students.

Disingenuous and "Performative" Programs

Research question 2 questioned the perspectives of Black doctoral students in regards to their program meeting CACREP standard 1:K which states: *The academic unit makes continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning environment.* Many participants stated that they felt their programs were more reactive than proactive when it came to addressing needs and standards around attaining, enrolling, retaining, and creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment for diverse students, specifically, Black doctoral students. In addition, participants also stated that they felt their program's efforts in response to CACREP standard 1:K was performative. Participant Camille stated:

> "I think they are performative in regards to attracting a diverse body, because that seems to be what is popular right now. As far as recruitment and getting Black students, I think a lot of it is more surface level and somewhat forced. It honestly doesn't feel like it's their number one priority and it's more so just a chore for them."

Sharing a similar sentiment, when asked her perception of her program retaining diverse students, Participant Shay stated:

> "To some degree, it felt performative. So the intentions were great but the consistency I say wasn't there. There's a desire and I think with there's the drive to do something. But I think there's a difference between just doing something and doing something of value or benefit. It's almost like, we'll throw something out there and we can say we're doing something to really diversify the population and pouring into it. I mean, actually assess if that something is even worthwhile for the students of target."

Participant Sasha spoke to how her university enrolled diverse students on purpose however, it wasn't until the university received negative feedback. She said:

> "I think the university has gotten some negative feedback on the diversity of students and representation. So from what I've seen, the pool of students they choose are becoming more diverse. Now is it really equitable? Probably not."

Sharing a similar sentiment, Ty stated:

> "There's minimal effort on being proactive. I feel like a lot of personnel, faculty, staff, whoever it may be in the department are just reactive. They only do something when something happens or students or CACREP make a big issue of it. That's when they decide to do something and create systems or procedures of support."

Participant Halo shared how her program seemed to have "met a quota" and once the box was checked, the number of Black students declined. She said:

> "My cohort is diverse. I would say my program is attracting diverse students, specifically Black students but it is not as consistent. It seemed like they were on a good track, but then it's like after our cohort you look at the next cohort and it doesn't appear as diverse; there's only one Black person. Then you look at the cohort after them and it's like, there's no Black students."

When Halo was asked why she thought this decline had happened she said:

> "I think they feel like okay, we had three, like we satisfied that for now. If anybody questions it, we can all say we had three in one cohort, look at how great we did! Instead of 'look at how great we are doing!"

Jas echoed this sentiment when she said:

> "I think diversity sounds good and they navigated it to check off boxes. But in all honesty they were incapable of supporting their students of color."

In addition, participants shared that they felt students weren't the only area that lacked in regards to attracting, enrolling, retaining and creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Participants reported that their programs also lacked in attracting and hiring Black faculty. Participant Chris stated:

> "If we aren't seeing a lot of color, then how comfortable are student gonna feel with either enrolling into a university, let alone staying at that university or program. The question becomes, do I really feel like I'm getting the support I need or do I feel like I can navigate this as adequately as white counterparts."

Participant Ty shared:

> "When it comes to social justice and multiculturalism, my program fails. A lot of the curriculum, articles, books, assignments, are centered around white voices. There typically only 20 minutes in a semester where we may talk about scholars of colors or look at their work. However, it is not intentional or interwoven throughout the curriculum. In addition they finally hired a Black faculty member this year. I'm sure we won't get any more for a while."

As it pertains to programs creating inclusive learning environments, Taylor spoke about how her program integrates social justice, but they are struggling to create an environment that reflects it.

Taylor said:

> "I believe because a lot of our courses are multiculturalism and social justice focused, I believe they are trying. I just believe that they are struggling on the doctoral side with what it means to create an inclusive learning environment. I'm not sure if they fully understand what that looks like."

Jas shared:

> "It's not that they can support us or create an inclusive environment. They don't want to. They don't want to hear our voices, they don't want to be uncomfortable, they don't want to make the necessary changes. They're not incapable of any of this. It's hard work and they aren't here for it."

Black Students Have Specific Needs

Each participant shared specific needs they feel they need to be successful in their doctoral counseling program. Each participant shared that their identities contributed to these needs in various ways due to their experiences. The most common needs among the participants were community and affinity spaces, mentorship, and safe and inclusive learning environments.

Community and Affinity Spaces. The participants shared that it was important that they were able to connect with other doctoral students in their program and outside of their program. Many of the participants spoke about programs and organizations such as the American Psychological Association Minority Fellowship Program, Chi Sigma Iota, and the National Board of Certified Counselors Minority Fellowship program and how those programs created communities for them with other Black doctoral students in counselor education. The participants spoke about how these programs created safe spaces for them to share their experiences and for them to connect and network with other Black doctoral students. Participants also shared that within these groups, they were able to find specific affinity spaces and

mentorship. Participants shared that having community was a top priority need and heavily influenced not only their success in their programs but also provided them with spaces. Participants Camille and Ty spoke about their experiences with NBCC. Participant Camille said:

> "Being able to build community with my NBCC fam has been a blessing. I'm not sure what I would have done without them."

Participant Ty stated:

> "If it wasn't for NBCC, I probably wouldn't feel as good as I do about staying in my program. The program has provided not only a community for me, but amazing mentors and great connections. I have also been able to seek help for building my counseling business."

Participants Javon and Taylor shared their experiences in the Black Women in Counselor Education Affinity Group. Participant Javon shared:

> "The Black women in CED group is amazing. It's a group of all Black women coming together to lift each other up. We support each other, share ideas and our research, and it's a safe place for us to find people who like minded."

Participant Taylor shared:

> "Having affinity groups is so necessary. I'm in the Black women in CED group and I have met so many amazing women and gained some bomb mentors."

Participant Kerv shared his experience being a part of a Black male group of counselors.

> "I think it's important for me to find other Black men within the field. It's not a lot of us forreal. But I'm a part of a group for Black men in counseling and it's a great place where we share our challenges with just being Black men in counseling and America honestly."

Mentorship. Participants emphasized the importance of mentorship and how that impacted their trajectory as doctoral students. Many of the participants shared that having a

mentor who was supportive, knowledgeable, and culturally competent propelled them to do better throughout their programs. Participants shared that having mentors who they could confide in regarding job searches, dissertations, the ins and outs of academia, publishing and grant writing and many other things was highly needed due to not receiving this information in core doctoral classes. The participants shared that while they appreciated mentors outside of their programs many felt having a mentor that was a part of their program was or could be a game changer. The participants also spoke about the impact of having mentors within their programs and how that allowed them to have advocates within their programs and aided in creating safer spaces for them.

Participant Jas spoke about her dissertation chair/ mentor.

> "If it wasn't for my chair, I wouldn't have graduated. University of Confidential did not want me to graduate and they tried all the things. But my chair mentored me through and had my back. She advocated for me when I couldn't."

Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments. Participants shared that having a safe and inclusive learning environment was necessary because it made the program more enjoyable and enabled participants to feel as though they could show up authentically. Participants shared that safe and inclusive learning environments provided them and their colleagues with the opportunity to share freely, learn from one another, and grow individually and as a clinician/ counselor educator.

"Push Through" Resilience

All 12 participants spoke about the need to "push through" and finish their doctoral programs. Participants spoke about the history of their Black ancestors surrounding resilience and that their will to "push through" was innate. This subtheme is defined as doctoral students' resilience to carry on or "push through" their programs despite experiencing social injustice,

discrimination, microaggressions, and much more. Participant Ty shared his perspective on Black doctoral students' desire to push through due to a generational pass down. He said:

> "We have to push through. It's because it was passed down from generation to generation and I think I believe that has a lot to do with historical trauma and being enslaved. Having a connection to enslavement where it's just put your head down and keep going even those certain things are messed up, you just know to keep it pushing."

Similarly Jas shared:

> "I think we have a strong sense of endurance where we endure what we think we have to specifically just to get what we need, in this case a terminal degree. I think just as a Black doctoral student, we have the ability to create community in our own ways or to seek out community as well. I think many of the Black doctoral students, including myself, have found that community and outside of our universities. In a nutshell, not only do we persevere, but we're resourceful."

In response to his program's retention efforts JaQuavius also shared Black students' history to persevere and push through. He said:

> "I don't think the university has done anything to specifically address or retain Black diverse students. I think that's just a result of our history and genetics. For Black people who have made it a point where we've been accepted into a doc program, I think it's that foundation that got us here in the first place so we gonna finish, no matter what. Despite everything we go through, we are always going to rise above and get that shit by any means necessary."

Summary

This chapter provided the findings of this study regarding the data that was collected from the semi-structured interviews with the twelve participants. In alignment with BlackCrit,

the voices of the participants are shared throughout the chapter to capture the participants voices in the most genuine way. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black doctoral students that attended CACREP accredited counselor education programs at PWIs. Based on the purposed of the study and utilizing a BlackCrit framework, the study sought to answer three research questions. These questions guided the semi-structured interview questions and provided rich data that emerged into themes. There were 4 themes that emerged from the data: (a) Representation is Meaningful and Matters (b) White Faculty Not Providing Safe Spaces (c) Disingenuous and Performative Recruitment and (d) Black Students Have Specific Needs. In addition to the four themes there were 3 subthemes: (a) “Find My People" which was a subtheme for Representation is Meaningful and Matters, (b) Black Students’ Inability to be Authentic and White Fragility, which were subthemes for White Faculty Not Providing Safe Spaces, and (c) “Push Through” Resiliency which was a subtheme for Black Students Have Specific Needs. While this study shed light on the challenges and experiences of the doctoral students, it’s important to note the things that the participants felt were working. These things included but were not limited to recruiting and attracting Black students, although minimal, having Black faculty that heavily supported students of color, and participants having affinity groups that they can be a part of where they feel supported. That said, the findings of this study shared the participants’ suggestions and recommendations for programs to better serve Black doctoral students and also serve as the justification for the qualitative survey addendum. These suggestions are shared in the implications section in the next chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This critical phenomenological study explored the experiences of Black doctoral students in Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredited counselor education programs at predominately white institutions (PWIs). The purpose of this study was to also explore how their institution is meeting CACREP standard 1:K and how their program addresses the unique needs of Black doctoral students. Based on findings, this chapter will provide CACREP programs and counselor educators with a CACREP addendum that will provide additional information and feedback regarding the feelings and perspectives of their Black doctoral students. The addendum will be a part of the program's CACREP self-study and will ensure that the voices of Black doctoral students are heard, valued, and considered.

The research study aimed to answer the following three questions: 1) What are the lived experiences of African American doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at predominately white institutions? 2) What are African American doctoral students' perceptions of their institution meeting CACREP standard Section 1K: *"The academic unit makes continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community?"* and 3) In what ways are institutions addressing the unique needs of African American doctoral students in CACREP counselor education programs at predominantly white institutions? These research questions guided the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the twelve participants and the following four themes emerged from the data: *Representation is Meaningful and Matters, White Faculty Not Providing Safe Spaces, Disingenuous and Performative Recruitment, Black Students Have Specific Needs.* In addition to the four themes that emerged, the following subthemes also

emerged: “Find my People,” was a subtheme that emerged along with *Representation is Meaningful and Matters;* Black students' inability to be authentic and white fragility were two subthemes that emerged along with the theme *White Faculty Not Providing Safe Spaces*; and “Push Through” (Resiliency) was a subtheme that emerged with the theme *Black Students Have Specific Needs.* This chapter will review the following topics and consist of the following sections: (a) discussion of findings, (b) implications of the findings, (c) limitations of the study, (d) recommendations for future research and (e) contributions of the study, and (f) conclusion.

Discussion

The twelve participants of this study were doctoral students in counselor education programs that were currently enrolled at PWIs or were 2022 graduates of counselor education programs at PWIs. The participants’ programs varied in location throughout the United States, however, there were no participants from the west coast. The researcher believes that although there were no participants from the west coast, that did not have a significant impact on the findings. The Henfield et al., 2013 and Baker and Moore (2015) studies had participants from all regions of the United States, and their participants all shared very similar sentiments.

All twelve participants identified as African American or Black with 33% of the participants identifying as male and 67% of the participants identified as female. While there were not any specific gendered differences in terms of the “what” participants said, it is important to note the gendered differences in “how” the participants responded. When the male participants responded, they responded with less words and few stories attached to their experiences. Their responses were clear and to the point and often briefer than those of female participants. The female participants responded with more emotion, brief stories of their experiences and their semi-structured interviews lasted longer than the male participants. The

female participants also spoke more about their bonds with their colleagues and how those relationships were imperative factors as to why they continued to trailblaze through their programs.

The framework for this study was dual-dimensional as BlackCrit and Critical Phenomenology were both utilized to guide the study. The research questions and the questions utilized in the semi-structured interview were both guided by the BlackCrit framework to illuminate the voices of the participants and share their stories in the most unfiltered way. The analysis of the data was guided by critical phenomenological methodology to best align with the BlackCrit framework. Additionally, the themes and subthemes addressed each of the three research questions.

The findings aligned with the purpose and significance of this study. While this study aimed to share and illuminate the stories and experiences of Black doctoral students in counselor education programs, this study also aimed to move counselor education programs and counselor educators from a space of awareness to a space of action. A proposed solution for the challenges that Black doctoral students experience in their programs, was to create a qualitative survey addendum for counselor education programs utilize when they are completing their CACREP self-study. This proposed addendum would capture the voices of Black participants in a genuine way and help programs determine their areas of growth based on their students' feedback (particularly the Black students). The themes that emerged from the data collected in this study are evidence that the proposed qualitative survey addendum is needed and valued.

Connecting Themes to Literature and Proposed Solution

The first theme to emerge from the data was "Representation is Meaningful and Matters." This theme had one subtheme, "Finding My People," and was representative of how the

participants expressed that being able to see themselves amongst faculty and colleagues promoted community and connection. In addition, all of the participants expressed a desire to find other Black people, as they wanted to connect with others that were like-minded and had similar experiences. This aligned with Henfield et al., (2011) as the participants from their study shared a desire to have access to more experienced Black faculty. The participants of this study shared that the connection with other Black faculty and colleagues allowed them to feel seen, heard, understood, and valued. Ultimately, being able to find their people created safe communities for the participants which is why Black people being represented within counselor education programs is meaningful and it matters. This theme spoke most to research question one regarding Black doctoral students' experiences in counselor education programs at PWIs. The proposed qualitative survey addendum would inform counselor education programs that Black students seek more faculty and colleagues that identify as Black in an effort to have individuals that have similar experiences, research interests, and similar challenges.

The proposed addendum would be inclusive of questions regarding how Black students feel about their program's faculty and their classroom experiences. This would be helpful because when the participants of this study were asked how they felt their program met this standard in regard to creating an inclusive learning environment, 92% of the participants reported that the white faculty within their program made them feel unsafe, isolated, and unsupported. Thus, the second theme, "White Faculty Not Providing Safe and Supportive Spaces" emerged. Aligning with the literature, the same sentiments were reported by other participants in other studies with some dating back more than decade ago (Henfield et al., 2011; Henfield et al., 2013; Harwood et al., 2012; Haskins et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2020). In addition to feeling unsafe,

participants shared that they were unable to be their authentic selves and felt as though white fragility was presented when Black or racial issues were presented or questioned.

From this data, two subthemes also emerged: Black Students' Inability to be Authentic and White Fragility. As both men and participants shared this sentiment as it related to their gender identities, this aligns with the literature as Shavers and Moore (2014) also spoke about how Black women often fear being labeled as the "angry Black woman." In addition, Johnson and Scott (2021) spoke about how Black men always felt they were under a microscope In reference to white fragility, the participants shared that they felt white faculty avoided or reframed everything regarding racial trauma. The participants also shared that they felt white faculty often times were incompetent of how to navigate social justice and multiculturalism. Ultimately, the participants shared that they felt unprotected by white colleagues and unsafe. The proposed qualitative addendum would help to capture the genuine and authentic voices of Black doctoral students' lived experiences in their programs, how those experiences impact them, and better inform programs what is happening in their classrooms that they may not be aware of. This theme spoke to both research question one, regarding Black doctoral students experiences in counselor education programs at PWIs and research question two regarding their perception of their program meeting the CACREP standard 1:K.

In regards to the third theme, Disingenuous and "performative" programs, the qualitative addendum would provide counseling education programs with their students' feedback of how their program is navigating and meeting CACREP standard 1:K expectations. As stated throughout this study, the CACREP standard 1:K speaks to a program's ability to attract, enroll, retain and create an inclusive learning environment for a diverse student population. This theme spoke to the participants' perceptions of their programs meeting the CACREP standard 1:K and

how they felt that some of the intentions of their programs may have been well intended, however, consistency lacked. Participants shared that their institution or program often seemed to operate in a "checkbox" mentality and once a box was "checked off" that checkbox item would go ignored. For example, a participant shared that her program admitted three Black people in her cohort, but there were no Black people admitted in the next two cohorts. The participant stated that it appeared her program said, "well we had three participants in the 2021 cohort, we met our requirement for diversity." Participants shared that the idea of diversity sounded good, however, programs lacked inclusivity within the classroom culture, courses and curriculum, and the hiring of Black faculty. Overall, the participants felt their program's initiatives to meet CACREP standard 1:K was forced and performative and oftentimes lacked substance and was sustainable. This theme responded to research question two which asked about the participants' perceptions of their program meeting the CACREP standard 1:K.

Lastly, the fourth and final theme spoke about the specific needs that Black students have. The qualitative addendum would ask students questions such as (a)"what are your specific needs to be successful in the program? (b) "How can the program and/or faculty meet your specific needs? and (c) "What are some things that the program and/ or faculty are currently doing that are meeting your specific needs? These questions will inform counselor education faculty and programs of Black students' specific needs, ways in which Black students need those needs met by faculty and their program, and a gauge on how the program and or faculty are already meeting those needs. This would be helpful because all of the participants shared needs they felt were specific to them as it pertained to their success in their programs. The most common needs expressed by the participants were: community and affinity spaces, mentorship, and faculty creating safe and inclusive environments within programs and the classroom. Many

of the participants shared that their experiences outside of their doctoral programs allowed them to find the most community amongst other Black colleagues and or like -minded individuals. The participants mentioned programs, organizations, and groups such as the American Counselor Association Minority Fellowship Program, Chi Sigma Iota, the National Board of Certified Counselors Minority Fellowship Program, Black Men in Counselor Education affinity group and the Black Women in Counselor Education affinity group. The participants shared that these programs, organizations, and or affinity groups provided safe spaces for Black doctoral students to create community, network, and helped to find mentors. Because representation matters and it is meaningful, 100% of the participants shared that having these communities were top priority and many of them shared that these programs, organizations, and or groups contributed significantly to their success in navigating their programs.

The other need mentioned was mentorship. Chan et al., (2015) described mentoring as a "one-to-one ongoing connection between a more experienced member and less experienced member that is aimed to promote the professional and personal growth of the protégé through coaching, support and guidance" (p.593). The participants shared that having a mentor who was supportive, culturally competent, social justice forward and knowledgeable about the counselor education field was needed to help prepare and propel them throughout their programs and throughout the field. Protivnak and Foss (2009) also shared that students having access to good mentorship was an important factor that contributed to the success of students in counselor education. The qualitative survey addendum would ask questions regarding mentorship and Black doctoral students' needs and idea of a good mentor. In addition to questions pertaining mentorship as it pertains to what has been shared from the findings and connections to the

literature. The qualitative survey addendum would inform counselor educators and programs with how to best meet this need of mentorship for their Black doctoral students.

Lastly, participants also shared that having a safe and inclusive learning environment created a more enjoyable space. Participants shared that safe and inclusive spaces looked like racial issues and racial trauma being discussed in a way that is transparent and solution focused, the curriculum is infused with multiculturalism and taught from a socially just perspective, and the thoughts, perspectives, and opinions are valued from all students. Participants shared that safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments provided the safe space for them to show up authentically and provided a safe space for all to learn from one another and grow as clinicians and counselor educators. Ultimately, the proposed survey would better help programs and counselor education faculty understand the specific needs of their Black students, how those needs could be met and how those needs can contribute to Black student success in their programs.

In addition, the participants shared their specific needs as Black doctoral students, many of them recognized that their needs were not being met. Despite those needs being met, they knew that they still had to "push through" and complete their programs successfully. Thus, the subtheme of this final theme is "Push Through" Resilience. All of the 12 participants shared that their ability to "push through" was an innate ability that came from their Black ancestors' and resiliency. The participants shared that their foundation has always been to "push through" despite social injustice, microaggressions, discrimination, racism, etcetera. The participants shared that they had a desire to keep it moving by creating the spaces they needed and positioning themselves to be successful no matter what they encountered. The proposed addendum would illuminate this sentiment and provide context for counselor education programs

and faculty around specifically which needs are not being met for Black students and how to assist in creating safe space for Black students. This theme spoke to research question three regarding Black doctoral students' specific needs.

Implications

While the results of this study provided a wealth of information regarding the perceptions and feelings of Black doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs, the ultimate goal of this study was to illuminate the voices of Black doctoral students in counselor education at PWIs and provide a platform for them to share their experiences, stories, and how they felt their programs could improve their experiences. Thus, the implications for counselors and counselor educators shared in this section are directly from the voices of the participants and further show the need for the proposed qualitative survey addendum.

Participants shared that counselor education programs should be intentional about creating safe spaces for Black students. This is done by diversifying faculty, such as intentionally hiring Black faculty (Henfield et al., 2013), having communities or affinity groups that attend to Black doctoral students, creating safe spaces within the department and classroom to have candid conversations surrounding racism, racial trauma, and racial inequities. Faculty, specifically white faculty, should promote multiculturalism and teach from a socially just perspective. Creating safe spaces also means genuinely accepting all students for who they are and promoting and supporting students to be their best and authentic selves. Creating a safe space is being meaningful and intentional about having purposeful events and programming that allows students to gain a deeper understanding of curriculum and provides space for students to apply what they have learned and make real life and relevant connections.

Creating safe spaces also means that counselor education programs should be mindful of gatekeeping. Programs should be mindful of students and or faculty that are a part of their programs that have racist views and mindsets and can be harmful to others. The proposed qualitative addendum would provide counselor education programs and faculty with specific feedback from their participants on how to create these safe spaces. For example, one of the participants stated that programs must "get rid of racist ass white people" if they truly want to restructure their program to meet CACREP standard 1:K. Gatekeeping is also inclusive of both white and faculty of color speaking up when white colleagues make discriminatory, disrespectful, or harmful remarks in regards to Black students, racism, racial trauma, etcetera. There should be procedures, protocols, and consequences in place for when these types of things happen in the classroom. In addition, program department chairs should ultimately be responsible for when faculty make the same discriminatory, disrespectful, or harmful remarks and there should be a protocol in place to hold them accountable as well.

For many faculty to create safe spaces, faculty personnel of programs must begin with doing the hard work of self-work. Self-work is extremely important for individuals needing or wanting to make change. The self-work is inclusive of identifying one's bias and prejudices, understanding how those biases and prejudices impact their work with students and social justice reform, and committing to do the work even when it is uncomfortable. Counselor Educator programs should provide faculty with professional development opportunities and resources, such as books and literature, to support their self-work, however, the work is contingent upon the faculty's desire to change and grow.

In addition to the self-work, faculty should also be willing to explore and understand the culture of their students (Ju et al., 2020). The focus should be centered around student

development both personally and professionally (Lerma et al., 2015). Counselor educators should continuously work to create and reframe their pedagogies, class materials and readings to reflect that of a multicultural and inclusive perspective (Goodman et al., 2015).

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has significantly grown and traditionally utilizes a CRT lens that emphasizes social justice and reform (Gaztambide et al., 2022). However, it is important to note that sometimes DEI approaches and training can have a negative impact as they often present as "white versus non-white" which can perpetuate white fragility and ultimately result in racial backlash (Gaztambide et al., 2022).That said, intentionality surrounding DEI initiatives is imperative and should be handled with intentionality. As it pertains to Black doctoral students, DEI should be utilized to ensure that the voices of Black doctoral students are heard and to better meet their needs for success. Thus, it is highly recommended that programs seek DEI initiatives that emphasize inclusivity and multiculturism to expand and grow in a forward motion. The researcher recommends a reframed DEI approach like the Race-Class approach posited by Lopez et al., (2019). This approach is race forward, however, it reframes racism while integrating social class concurrently. As it pertains to the purpose of this study and the need for immediate implications, this approach may be beneficial to those who are on the fence or indifferent about this work and can provide a common goal for a need for progression.

Counselor education programs should constantly evaluate their programs and systems and the qualitative survey addendum would be very helpful in this evaluation. Inclusive of curriculum, programs should constantly evaluate if their curriculum aligns with multiculturalism and social justice. Programs should ensure that the curriculum is not rooted in eurocentrism or only inclusive of white voices. This includes but is not limited to, articles and textbooks read in

class and research discussed and reviewed. Systems and policies that are rooted in white hegemony should be challenged and restructured. In addition, programs should consider what systems and policies are serving as a barrier for success for their Black students. Per the participants, this looks like polling and questioning their Black students for barriers that they are encountering. One participant shared "It's not that programs don't have the capacity to serve us (Black doctoral students), it's that they don't want to take the necessary steps to hear our voices." Like the premise of BlackCrit, programs cannot accurately address their systems and policy barriers for Black doctoral students until they understand their experiences from their lens.

The proposed qualitative survey addendum not only provides Black doctoral students in counselor education programs the opportunity to share their perspectives, thoughts, and feelings, it also provides counselor educators with genuine data to help them determine whether or not their program is meeting the CACREP standard 1:K. This addendum is in alignment with the BlackCrit framework and will serve as a qualitative tool for programs to directly hear the voices of their Black doctoral students. This qualitative survey addendum to the CACREP self-study will speak specifically to CACREP standard 1:K and will ensure that Black doctoral students' experiences and perspectives are captured in the most authentic way. The qualitative survey addendum will be similar to the semi-structured interview questions from this study and will pose questions that pertain to Black doctoral students experiences with faculty in the program, their experiences with racism (if applicable) within their program, their specific needs (those being met and not met), ways their program to improve to better meet their needs, and ways their program can improve (if applicable) to create a safe(r) learning environment. This qualitative addendum will be anonymous so that students feel free and safe to share their experiences in an authentic manner. This qualitative addendum is not intended to qualify or disqualify programs

from attaining accreditation, the purpose of this addendum is to illuminate the voices of Black doctoral students and provide the needed data for programs to ensure they are best meeting the needs of diverse students, specifically Black doctoral students.

Admittedly, this proposed qualitative addendum can only be affect if mindsets are willing to change. There have been recent attacks on DEI initiatives inside of and outside of counselor education. Despite legislation that could potentially harm DEI initiatives, this proposed solution is meant to produce genuine data that expresses the needs and experiences of Black doctoral students. This data is meant for counselor educator programs faculty to utilize so that they can better prepare, strategize, and create safe spaces for their Black doctoral students. Nevertheless, if mindsets of faculty or counselor educator programs are not willing to change, the proposed qualitative addendum will not be as effective. However, if this survey was a requirement from CACREP and attached to the CACREP self-study, the data could reveal that programs are not meeting standards with fidelity and may need to be required to make adjustments prior to receiving full accreditation or reaccreditation. In this case, a provisional accreditation should be offered and follow ups should occur to ensure that protocols, resources, and needs of students are being met.

Conclusively, the proposed qualitative survey addendum is not the sole solution to the continuous issues with Black doctoral students in counselor education. With current controversial legislations and the attacks on DEI, initiatives for change can be very difficult to implement. Unfortunately, counselor education guidelines, regulations, and protocols may subject to their respective state's legislature. Thus, causing some and or many initiatives to become null and void. While there is a need for more than a changed mindset, the primary researcher believes that the changed mindset could potentially be the culprit of many changes,

especially in spaces where legislation is against any DEI reform. If counselor educators can see and understand how racism and lack of inclusion actually harms and stagnates the profession, their interest and or desire to consider/ attempt change may shift. Thus, creating an opportunity to implement inclusive practices and systems that will ultimately meet the needs of Black doctoral students.

Limitations

The findings of this study included three limitations. As it pertains to traditional phenomenology, a potential limitation in this study was that the researcher of the study identified as an African American doctoral student in a counselor education program at PWI. However, critical phenomenology would argue that my similar and familiar identity as my participants strengthened my connection with participants. Nevertheless, the researcher made several attempts to eliminate bias in this study via trustworthiness. The researcher utilized bridling, engaged in reflexive journal writing, and memoed through the data collection and analyzing process. In addition, the researcher utilized investigator triangulation and member checking to ensure consistency among the findings. Intentionally, the research team consisted of a doctoral student who did not racially identify with the participants and was training in analyzing qualitative research. The researcher also sent transcripts to participants to ensure their voices were captured accurately. The second limitation of this study was social desirability. Social desirability occurs when the participants may have a desire to appease the interviewer, which may impact their responses. Unfortunately, this cannot be controlled. The third and final limitation of this study was that the participants of the study only represented small portions of various regions throughout the United States. Despite multiple attempts to gain participants throughout the United States, participants of the study mainly attended schools in the south and

on the east coast. There were limited students from the midwest region and no student representative of the west coast.

Future Research

This study provided useful information in regard to the lived experiences of Black doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs. However, there is still a significant need for more research as it pertains to counselor education programs and Black students in general. It is important to note that diversity equity and inclusion is inclusive of intersectionality. That said, the data of this study did not reveal anything related to sexuality or LGBTQA. For future research, sexuality should be included in the demographic data to ensure that intersectionality is authentically being represented. Moreover, based on the study's findings, the following recommendations should be considered for future research.

As referenced throughout this study, a proposed qualitative addendum has been suggested as a potential solution to better inform programs how they are meeting the CACREP 1:K standard from the students' perspective. For future research, it is suggested that a counselor education program utilize the proposed addendum as a pilot study and data be collected to determine effectiveness, impact, and experiences.

While this study focused on Black doctoral students in counselor education at PWIs it would be worthwhile for a study to look at Black master's students as well. Many of the participants from the study spoke about their experiences as master's students and how the students they were supervising at the time of the study felt similarly to them in regard to their program creating safe learning environments. The first future research recommendation would be to do an exhaustive study of how programs are meeting the needs of both Black masters and doctoral students and compare to see if there are any differences.

This study focused specifically on Black doctoral students at CACREP accredited institutions, however, a second recommendation for future research would be to examine the differences between the experiences of students at CACREP institutions versus those at non-accredited institutions. The research should specifically examine if students have differing or similar experiences in regard to the way their program creates inclusive environments and promotes social justice and multiculturalism.

The third and final recommendation for future research would be to explore how programs are conducting their CACREP self-study and the ways in which the voices and perspectives of their students are collected and considered when they are showing that they meet particular standards. This data could better reveal next steps for counselor education programs as it pertains to ensuring that they are moving from performative to normative.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of twelve African American/ Black doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at PWIs, how their program met CACREP standard 1:K, and how their program addressed their unique specific needs. Utilizing a BlackCrit theoretical framework and a Critical Phenomenological Methodology there were four major themes that emerged from the data of this study. These major themes were *Representation is Meaningful and it Matters, White Faculty Not Providing Safe Spaces, Disingenuous and Performative Recruitment, and Black Students Have Specific Needs*. In addition, there were four subthemes: "Find My People," Black Students Inability to Be Authentic, White Fragility, and "Push Through" resiliency.

These themes showed that Black doctoral students being able to see themselves in faculty and connect with other Black people was important and critical for creating community. These

themes also showed that it is important for all faculty to create safe spaces, however, it highlighted how Black students felt unsafe with white faculty and were disappointed in the way white faculty operated in white fragility. The themes showed that Black doctoral students felt their programs' initiatives in regards to CACREP standard 1:K were performative and not sustainable and oftentimes did not meet their needs. These themes also highlighted that Black students have specific needs that they felt were important to their success in their program. This study and the emergent themes shed light on the potential discrepancy behind programs "checking a box" that their program meets the CACREP standard 1:K and the genuine perceptions of programs' Black doctoral students.

Due to this potential discrepancy and in alignment with the purpose of the study, this study also sought to provide counselor educators and counselor education programs with a solution that can be implemented to improve their programs and ensure that their Black doctoral students feel heard, valued and respected. This proposed solution is to provide a qualitative addendum to the CACREP self-study that will ensure that the experiences of Black doctoral students are represented in the most genuine way in accordance with their perspective. In addition to the proposed qualitative addendum, other implications were provided directly from participants as suggestions for counselor education programs to improve. Recommendations for future research were also provided to suggest that the continuing of research surrounding this topic is needed. The researcher hopes that this study, the proposed qualitative addendum, other implications, and recommendations will move counselor education programs from a space of awareness to a space of intentional action.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Email Recruitment Script for The Lived Experiences of African American Doctoral Students in Counselor Education

Greetings,

I am Brittany Glover and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and I am working on my dissertation study. I am investigating the lived experiences of African American Doctoral students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs at a predominately white institution/historically white institution, and I am inviting all African American doctoral students that are in a CACREP accredited counselor education program at PWI/HWI to participate in this study.

During this study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview via Zoom. The questions will ask about your experiences as doctoral student in a CACREP program, if your program is meeting your needs, your perception of whether your program is meeting certain CACREP standards, and if your program has specific strategies or protocols for supporting and retaining Black/African American/students of color.

If you choose to participate, interviews will last approximately 60 minutes and will be recorded. If you are interested in participating in this study, please see the next steps.

Eligibility:

- You self identify as an African American/ Black.
- You self identify as a 2nd year or beyond doctoral student or recent 2021/2022 graduate in a counselor education program.
- Your counselor education program is CACREP accredited.
- Your counselor education program is delivered in a traditional, face to face format.
- Your counselor education program is at a predominately white institution (PWI) or historical white institution (HWI).

NOTE: A PWI is an institution where the population is 50% or more white. A HWI is an institution where the institution was once considered a PWI but now the white population is 49% or below.

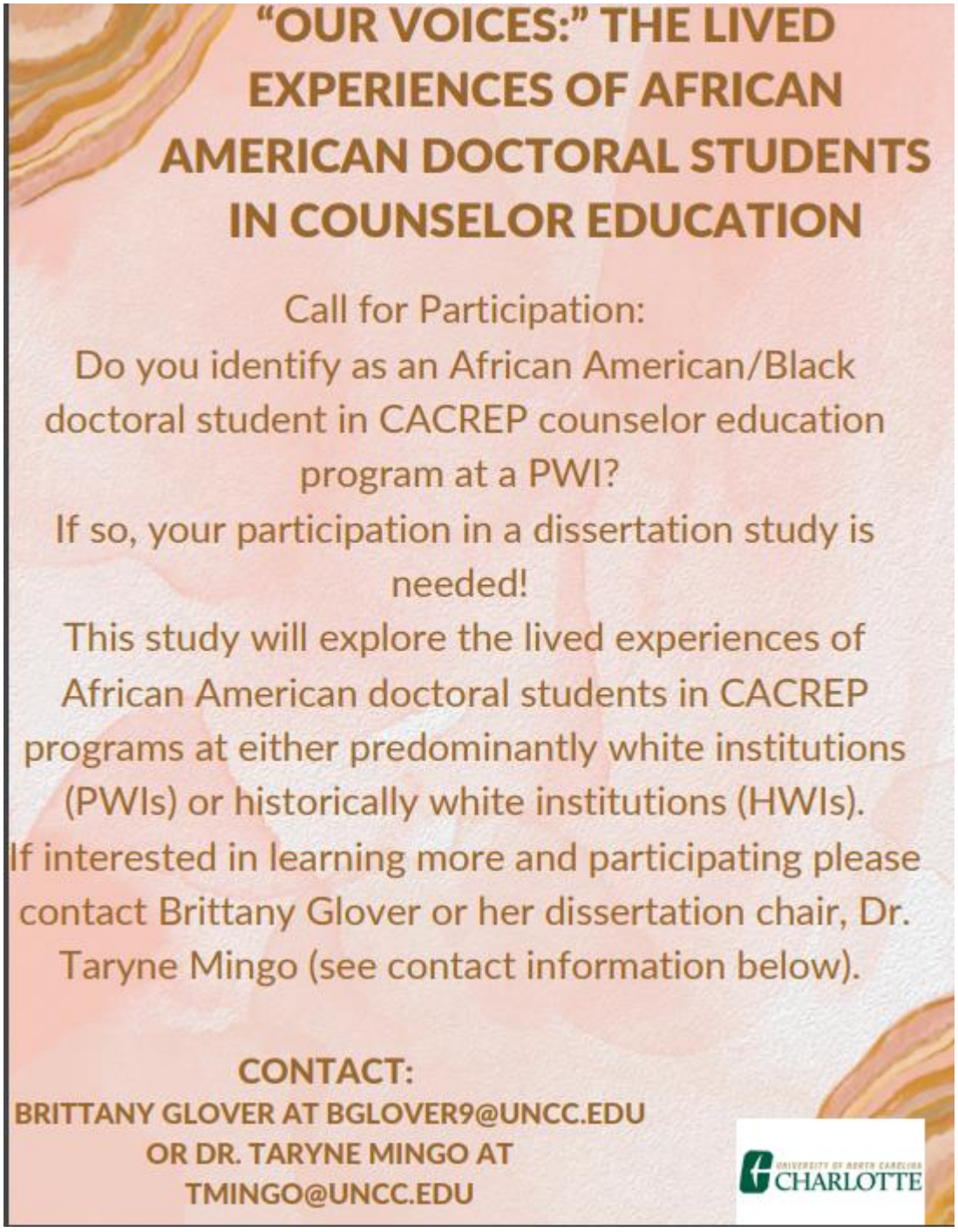
If you checked all the boxes above and are interested in participating in this study, please click this link to complete the informed consent, the eligibility questionnaire, and provide your contact information. I will contact you to schedule your interview once the informed consent and eligibility questionnaire is received.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at bglover9@uncc.edu. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Taryne Mingo, at tmingo@uncc.edu. If you do not meet the eligibility criteria, but would still like to help, please forward this email to any African American doctoral students that you feel may meet the inclusion criteria. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Brittany Glover
Brittany Glover, NBCT, NCC, LCMHCA
Doctoral Candidate
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FLYER



APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. With which racial/ethnic group do you identify?

2. What is your age/gender?

4. When did you start your program?

5. Have you graduated from your counselor education doctoral program? If so, when?

6. Where are you in your doctoral journey (ie. first year, graduate, etc.)?

7. Is or was your counselor education doctoral program CACREP accredited?

8. How would you describe your advisor's race/ethnicity? Gender?

9. Is your program in a PWI/ HWI? Or an HBCU? PWI- Predominantly White Institution; HWI- Historically White Institution; HBCU- Historically Black College or University

10. What modality is your program predominately delivered in? (Ie. face to face or online)

APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Baker et al. (2015); Haskins et al. (2013)

S1. How would you describe your overall experience as an African American in your counselor education doctoral program?

S2. What are your perceptions of your institution meeting CACREP standard Section 1K: *The academic unit makes continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community?*

S3. From your perspective as an African American, what are your specific needs to be successful in your program?

S3-A. If applicable, how does your program meet your specific needs?

S4. How would you describe your experiences with faculty? (positive or negative)

S4-A. Are there faculty that identify with the same/similar race as you?

S4-B. In what ways, if any, does that affect/impact you?

S5. How would you describe your experiences in regard to peer interactions?

S6. What challenges, if any, confront you as an African American counselor education doctoral student?

S6-A. How do you address the challenges?

S6-B. Does your counselor education doctoral programs' structural and cultural practices contribute to the challenges?

S7. What strategies do you as an African American counselor education doctoral student identify as helpful for enhancing your counselor education doctoral program experiences?

S8. What are your major sources of support as an African American counselor education doctoral student?

S9. What are some things you think could be done to improve your experience as an African American doctoral student in counselor education?

S10. What additional information would you like to share?

APPENDIX E: PROPOSED QUALITATIVE SURVEY ADDENDUM

Please complete the following questions and provide as much detailed information as possible. This information is collected anonymously and will be utilized to better inform our counselor education program and systems.

Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your race?
3. How old are you?
4. Did you attend this institution for your masters degree?
5. What is your counseling track? (school, addictions, clinical mental health, etc.)
6. What year are you in the program?

Qualitative Survey Questions

1. Describe your overall experience in the counselor education program?
2. Describe your perspective of how the counseling program meets your needs?
3. As it pertains to your success in the counseling program, what is your perception of the program meeting your needs? Please explain how your program meets or does not meet your needs.
4. What are your specific needs to be successful in the program?
5. From a social justice and multicultural perspective, do you feel the counseling program is meeting the needs of all students? Please explain why or why not?
6. Do you feel the program has accurate representation of faculty as it pertains to diversity? If not, how can the program address this?

7. Do you feel the counseling program creates an inclusive learning environment? Please explain why or why not and provide examples if possible.
8. Do you feel safe to address your needs, concerns, challenges, etc. with faculty within the counseling program?
9. Do you feel professors create an inclusive learning environment? Please explain why or why not and provide examples if possible.
10. If you could change one thing about the counseling program from a social justice/ multicultural perspective, what would it be?
11. What are some things that you feel are going well in the counseling program?
12. How can the counseling program improve their efforts as it pertains to being social justice forward and multiculturally diverse?
13. Do you receive mentorship from a faculty in the program? If so, please share your experiences with that faculty mentor?
14. What are your mentorship needs?
15. If applicable, please list any barriers to your success in the counseling program?
16. Do you feel supported by faculty in the program? Please explain why or why not.
17. What is your perception of the counseling program attracting, enrolling, and retaining diverse students?
18. Do you feel you can be your authentic self in the counseling program? In the classroom? Please explain why or why not.
19. Have you experienced microaggressions or any act of racism in the counseling program or in the classroom setting? If so, please share your experience.

20. Do you feel you are provided with the necessary resources and or information to be successful in the counseling program? Please explain what resources/ information you are receiving (if applicable) and those needed resources/ information you are not receiving (if applicable).