THE SHARED EXPERIENCES OF PRIVILEGE AND OPPRESSION AMONG BLACK FEMALES IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION PROGRAMS: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

Because the United States has one of the most complex cultural identities in the Western world, it is essential that counselors and counselor educators develop the multicultural and social justice competencies needed to work within this diverse society. To this end, counselor educators must have awareness of their own knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to privilege, oppressions, social group status, etc., as well as to be aware of the intersectionality of privilege and oppression across one's various identities. This is particularly important given that research suggests that the intersectional privilege and oppression dynamics often experienced by Black females facing unique challenges affecting their success and performance. Yet historically, Black females have received minimal acknowledgement in research, praxis, practice, discourse, curriculum, and policies within institutional settings. To address this gap, a qualitative thematic analysis design was used to gain knowledge of the Black female doctoral students' experiences with privilege and oppression in counselor education programs (CES).

This study examined how Black females in CES programs described privilege and oppression; how they experienced privilege and oppression within their department, and with their interactions with faculty, and in the learning environment; and how they are impacted by their experiences as Black women. Several themes emerged for each of the five research questions examined. While most of the emergent themes were consistent with previous research, they also provided greater insight in understanding the experiences of privilege and oppression faced by Black females in CES programs. Implications and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: privilege, oppression, counselor education, counseling, intersectionality, Black female, multiculturalism, social justice

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Kia, Janae, and Trevor Jr.

"Blaze your path and be amazed!"

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Maya Angelou, one said, *"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."* Thank you for making me feel like I could succeed.

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List of Abbreviations

American Counseling Association (ACA)

Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES)

Attitudes and beliefs, Knowledge, Skills (AKS)

Attitudes and beliefs, Knowledge, Skills, and Action (AKSA)

Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID)

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

Counselor Education and Supervision (CES)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ)

Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC)

Multicultural Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The United States is characterized by an increasingly diverse population, giving it one of the most complex cultural identities in the Western world (Waggoner, 2021). Given this cultural complexity, it is imperative for counselor educators to be multiculturally competent and to be agents of social justice (Chung & Bemak, 2012; American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014). Counselor educators must have awareness of their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to ethnicity and culture prior to engagement with students and faculty (Ratts et al., 2015). Awareness can be achieved by asymmetrical reciprocity, entrusting those of dominant positions in relation to class, gender, and race to acknowledge and take regard of others without taking their perspective (Young, 1997). This qualitative inquiry gives voice to the shared experiences of Black women counselor educators in counselor education and supervision (CES) programs to gain an understanding of their unique individual perspectives.

Background of the Problem

Counselor educators are vital to the development of future leaders within the counseling profession (Goodrich et al., 2011). Counselor education students who matriculate within programs accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) complete advanced training in counseling, leadership, research, supervision, and teaching (CACREP, 2009, 2015; Del Rio & Mieling, 2012). Although many scholars emphasize the need to infuse multiculturalism into all aspects of counselor education training programs (Collins & Pieterse, 2007; D’Andrea & Daniels, 1991; Reynolds, 1995), the single-course approach is still the tool most frequently used for multicultural training. In a survey of counselor education programs, most reported that multicultural issues were the domain of specific multicultural counseling courses (Abreu et al., 2000; Carter & Pieterse, 2008;

Ponterotto, 1997). But worldwide ethnic and cultural diversity requires that counselor educators cultivate the knowledge to interact and work effectively with students and faculty in cross-cultural contexts (Ratts et al., 2015).

Counselor educators can seek guidance from the 2016 CACREP standards, which articulate core areas of education and training within counselor education programs that align with the professional expectations of counselor performance in advocacy, counseling, leadership, professional identity, teaching, supervision, and research to foster the development of counselor educators' identity and professional competence. However, there are inconsistent guidelines for the provision of cultural competence in counselor education. This ambiguity makes counselor readiness and competence difficult to assess and affects counselor educators' ability to help interning counselors develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of culturally competent practitioners (Ratts et al., 2015).

Newer standards speak to awareness and acknowledgement that counselors must possess when working in an ever-increasing diverse society, with reference to awareness of cultural power, such as the degree of privilege one receives in society based on cultural identity and within the counseling relationship (Hays et al., 2007). Multicultural and social justice competent counselors have always been responsible for acknowledging their assumptions, worldviews, values, beliefs, and biases as members of privileged and marginalized groups; however, more recently counselor educators have been challenged to become aware of social identities, social group statuses, power, privilege, and oppression (Ratts et al., 2015). Multicultural and social justice competencies are factors that are indispensable to student efficacy and confidence as a culturally sensitive and responsive counselor (Chan et al., 2018).

Multicultural Counseling Competencies

The multicultural counseling competencies (MCCs) were originally developed by Sue et al. (1992), expanded by Arredondo et al. (1996), and later revised by Ratts et al. (2015) with an introduction to social justice competencies. The goal of multicultural training is cultural competence—ongoing awareness, knowledge, and skills that cultivate effective and appropriate communication and mutual understanding of diverse groups (Sue & Sue, 2019). Quadrants are used to illustrate the intersectionality of privilege and oppression that influence educator–student identities (Ratts et al., 2015). Every race of people inherits the biases of their culture. The structures and practices that have maintained the advantage of the majority culture, and the challenges that have been endured by minorities over time, can only be understood by taking a historical, institutional, and comparative approach (Creanza et al., 2017). According to Sue and Sue, (2012) becoming culturally competent in counseling diverse populations is a complex interaction of many dimensions that includes affective, conceptual, practice and training issues. It is a journey requiring an emotional awakening to one's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to ethnicity and culture.

To address the needs and inequities of an increasingly diverse society, changes were made to MCCs. MCCs have continued to expand over the years with the integration of multicultural and social justice counseling competencies (MSJCCs; Ratts et al., 2015; Sue et al., 1992). Thus, there is considerable overlap when contemplating the complexities of multiculturalism and social justice, although social justice is more narrowly defined than multiculturalism. Multiculturalism focuses on diversity from the perspective of inclusion and acceptance, whereas social justice adopts a more focused emphasis on privilege, equity, and oppression that occurs within the context of societal diversity (Vera & Speight, 2003).

Multicultural Social Justice Counseling Competencies

The MSJCCs were created as a reflection of the rapid changes in diversification of the counseling profession and the world. They encompass a lifelong endeavor for the counselor to be aware of intercultural interaction with people of diverse cultures, aspire to improve their understanding, and commit to competence and cultural humility (Hook et al., 2013). MSJCCs can be viewed as a natural progression of MCCs (Sue et al., 1992), which evolved to illuminate the need for increased awareness of inclusivity and a heightened understanding of culture and diversity as it surrounds the intersection of identities. MSJCCs have also deployed a comprehensive way to address the expanding role of professional counselors to include counselor education and social justice advocacy (Ratts et al., 2015). MSJCCs designate guidelines for developing and perpetuating competency for the counseling profession in relation to accreditation, consultation, counseling practice, education, research, supervision, theory, and training. Lastly, the MSJCCs have integrated the multicultural and social justice counseling constructs and literature to include cultural worldviews, privilege, and oppression experiences to address the complexities of counselor educator, student, and client interactions (Ratts et al., 2015).

Social Justice in Counselor Education

There is a need for counselor educators to focus on awareness and advocacy for diverse cultures, faculty diversity, and the ways institutional cultures affect teaching excellence. Although there is also a need for the field of counseling to develop a comprehensive definition for what constitutes social justice counseling (Kaplan et al., 2014; West & Moore, 2015), the most precise definition of social justice as it relates to the counseling professions has been offered by Goodman et al. (2004), who conceptualized the work of social justice as being “the

scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, which put individuals at a disadvantage or push them to the margins of society to limit gain and decrease access, through self-determination" (p. 795). Social justice counseling conveys professional conduct that is in direct opposition to marginalization (Lee, 2018).

Counselor educators are responsible for modeling and fostering socially just competence and helping to create a culture of acceptance and possibilities for students and faculty. However, status and access to power, along with social identity differences, may be unequally distributed within the same institutions in which counselors are trained. Thus, educators are tasked with addressing individual and cumulative advantages (due to privilege) and disadvantages (due to marginalization) as well as increasing student awareness and reducing the possibility of students rejecting the validity of privilege as a form of inequality (Minarik, 2017). Counselor educators are also expected to maintain flexibility as they facilitate multiple perspectives of various people, maintaining an appreciation for diverse cultural differences while training doctoral students to teach master's level students to be social justice counselors who positively affect the lives of their clients (Bevly et al., 2017). Many doctoral students lack the knowledge needed to accurately disseminate all that is comprised within the terms privilege, oppression, marginalization, and social justice and therefore may find it difficult to promote a concept they have yet to fully comprehend.

A significant component of progression for the field of counseling is working to identify educational and supervision standards that address the social justice aspect of counselor education training to sustain the vision for the field. Counselor educators' ability to adhere to the counseling standards are not monitored by the profession, so some may not possess informed practices as change agents of multicultural and social justice awareness and praxis (Chan, 2018).

To address these needs and inequities, changes were made to the MSJCCs that involve the counselor educator's responsibility to be aware and to teach students to develop an awareness of privilege and oppression to guide their interactions with diverse individuals and groups. It is important for counselor educators to be culturally aware, sensitive, and effective in working with students and faculty from diverse backgrounds. No social group is absolved from inheriting the biases of their culture and the systemic structures and practices that have maintained the advantage of the majority culture. A historical, institutional, and comparative approach can help to bring awareness of the challenges which have been endured by marginalized students' overtime (Creanza et al., 2017).

Counselor educators and counselors as agents of social justice must advocate access, challenge inequity, inequality, multiple forms of bias, promote awareness, and take a stand against systemic barriers (Lee, 2018). The calls for counselor educators to integrate a social justice perspective into the counseling competencies require an acknowledgment that oppression and marginalization exists and that it negatively impacts the mental health of faculty, students, and clients. Human responses to systemic inequities that serve to marginalize and disenfranchise various groups of people (Vera & Speight, 2003). Counselor educators must recognize that institutional and cultural barriers exist for minority students and faculty and that oppressive experiences affect student performance and teaching excellence. Institutional support and leadership are critical for constructing change that endures resistance (Jones et al., 2015; Louis et al., 2016).

Awareness

Awareness must be viewed as an initial action on the part of the counselor educator prior to engagement with students; however, it is often overlooked as they progress from obtaining

knowledge to advocacy. Counselor educators must develop awareness of privilege and oppression and the extensive forms of bias that perpetuate them in order to help students cope and heal from bias and oppression, prepare them to navigate discrimination, and advocate for institutional and systemic change (Ratts et al., 2015). In addition to developing an awareness of personal cultural biases and values, counselors are challenged to cultivate awareness in exploration of their own attitudes and beliefs concerning privilege and oppression. It is the awareness of implicit bias that sheds light on privilege and the notion that one person is better than another (Banks, 2006). Counselor educators who are unaware and do not integrate an awareness of privilege and oppression into their work may find themselves limited in their ability to address institutional barriers, becoming a hinderance to the growth of the counseling profession (Ratts et al., 2016).

Counselor educators will need to take a contextual approach when working with students and communities, recognizing that individuals are part of an expansive socioecological system (Ratts et al., 2015). Therefore, an in-depth understanding of context has become paramount, especially for people from historically marginalized backgrounds, such as Black females. Within this context, an individual may not only have multiple identities, such as a Black lesbian, female, but may also have intersecting privileged and oppressed statuses, like having privilege as a counselor educator along with a racial and gender oppressed status. As society progresses, multicultural and social justice competence among counselors must also adapt to address the needs of culturally diverse groups and the concerns that both shape and contextualize mental health and well-being. Becoming culturally competent in counseling diverse populations is a complex interaction of many dimensions that includes affective, conceptual, practice, and training issues (Sue & Sue, 2012). Counselor educators must promote diversity, equity, and

inclusion for marginalized students and faculty.

Framework for the Study

Intersectionality provides a theoretical framework that allows for consideration of ways to deconstruct the structures of race and gender oppression (Collins, 1990/2000). The framework consists of representational, political, and structural intersectionality. The origins of intersectionality are found in the shared experiences of women of color who were familiar with intersecting dimensions of oppression. White feminist allies and international feminist define intersectionality as analyzing and understanding complex human conditions and experiences in the world that are shaped by multiple factors in diverse, reciprocal, and influencing ways (Collins & Bilge, 2020).

An intersectional approach to identity, which is historically and socially constructed, grants access to oneself, others, and the world (Vamvaka-Tatsi, 2020). Various aspects of social identity are simultaneously constructed by other dimensions of identity such as race, gender, sexuality, and class (Ramsey, 2014). How one understands themself and how others understand them varies across time and identities, since identities are not fixed but constantly constructed (Holvino 2012). Because women of color experience more than one identity simultaneously, they may also be able to create what Hurtado (1996) called a shifting consciousness or an ability to shift from one group's awareness of social reality to another and often perceive multiple social realities while maintaining cohesion. The experiences of Black females also illuminate an awareness of their position in relation to class oppression, racism, sexism, as well as additional systems of domination (Haynes, 2020). Intersectional thinking recognizes systemic discrimination because of one's ability, economic status, gender, identity, immigration status, national origin, race, sexual orientation, or other aspects of a person's identity that may impact s

access to opportunity. Intersectionality thus describes the interconnecting patterns of oppression and marginalization that structure a person's life as well as opportunities and enfranchisement (Aguayo-Romero, 2021).

An intersectionality paradigm is a means for counselors and counselor educators to address issues of privilege and oppression within their practice and profession. Intersectionality was used in this study to address complex individual, inter-relational, structural, and ideological aspects of dominance and privilege emerging from dissimilarities (Ramsey, 2014). Intersectionality as a methodological paradigm provides the support for the reflective context typical of those living at the margins of society in the United States (Ramsey, 2014). Intersectionality assumes that human experience emerges in a dynamic matrix of dominance and oppression, with social justice being achieved through common interests in challenging systemic oppression (Ramsey, 2014). Perhaps because this approach supports strategic engagement for change on behalf of marginalized people, it affirms an understanding of social justice that is experienced as a process of increasing freedom and self-determination rather than an elusive achievement (Dulitzky, 2010).

Intersectionality of Privilege and Oppression

One of the most powerful concepts concerning commitment to the values of multiculturalism (ACA, 2014; Arredondo et al., 1996; Ratts et al., 2015; Sue et al., 1992), social justice (Lee, 2007; Loya 2011; Minarik, 2017; Mullaly, 2010; Ratts et al., 2015), and cultural competence (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Estrada et al., 2013) is privilege. A system of privilege is organized around dominance, identification, and centeredness (Mullaly, 2010). It is the product of cultural, economic, political, and social advantages that are often gained as birthrights, such as ability status, gender, language, lineage, religion, sexual orientation, and education level or

socioeconomic status (Fine, 2012). It is the misuse of privilege and affinity bias that incites oppression and marginalization. Privilege may seem to be normal to those who are unaware of its subtlety and ambiguity (Minarik, 2017), whereas others remain in disbelief of its existence (McIntosh, 2012). Therefore, oppression inadvertently becomes a social system and patterns are assimilated and perpetuated. A culture of privilege naturalizes inequality, and its purpose is to preserve the nature of social injustice (Ferber, 2012). Awareness and acknowledgment of privilege facilitates confrontation of societal and institutional oppression in America.

Today, there is concern that academia is still perpetuating marginalization and oppression throughout the academic landscape (Ahmed, 2012; Minarik, 2015). Although there have been numerous scholars in the counseling profession who have called for the incorporation of social justice counselor education and training (Bemak et al., 2011; Chang et al., 2010; Chung & Bemak, 2012; Talleyrand et al., 2006; Toporek & McNally, 2006), there is concern that multiculturalism and social justice have not been fully embraced (Bemak et al., 2011). However, there is an apparent relationship between social injustice and the mental health of groups upon which injustices are perpetrated. Within these absent perspectives are the shared experiences of bias and discrimination that prevent the emergence of critical thinking and perpetuate the status quo (Bemak 2008; Goodman et al., 2015; Sue & Constantine, 2007).

Shared Intersectional Experience of Black Females

Counselor education scholars have established that the experiences of Black female counselor educators in academia include unique challenges affecting their success and performance (e.g., Haskins et al., 2016). Intersectionality supports the notion that Black females' experiences are collectively intertwined with their race and gender (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Structural intersectionality accentuates multiple forms of structural oppression that have shaped

the unique experiences of Black females (Crenshaw, 1991); this oppression has been obscured by overlapping identity categories such as Black male and White female (Cho et al., 2013; Stojek & Fischer, 2013). Historically, Black females have received minimal acknowledgement in research, praxis, practice, discourse, curriculum, and policies (Collins, 1998, 2000; Patton & Ward, 2016) within institutional settings. Further gender hierarchies perpetually affect Black females' income disproportionately, influencing the type of jobs obtained as well as the wages that are garnered compared to White males (Collins, 2000). Many Black females have thus cultivated an awareness of their societal status that is rooted in Black feminist ideologies, which has helped them to challenge intersectional oppression (Collins, 2000; Lloyd-Jones, 2009).

Black females in higher education administration share daily experiences that contradict achievement ideology or belief that education plus hard work equal success for everyone (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). This is also critical for Black females in CES programs who are often isolated and placed in positions that are on the margins of organizations (Ward, 2016). It is critical that the infusion of multiculturalism and social justice concepts move beyond the classroom platform into areas of practicum, supervision, and fieldwork experience, during the cultivation of counselor identity and professional development.

Statement of the Problem

Given that the United States has one of the most complex cultural identities in the Western world (Waggoner, 2021), it is essential that counselors and counselor educators to be develop the multicultural and social justice competencies needed to work within this diverse society (ACA, 2014; Ratts et al., 2015). To this end, counselor educators must have awareness of their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to their privilege, oppressions, social group status, etc. Yet research suggests that the intersectional privilege and oppression dynamics

often experienced by Black females are often unacknowledged, resulting in underrepresentation and social inequality in academia (Shannon, 2020; Lloyd-Jones, 2009). This in turn results in Black females being silenced and pushed to the fringes of academia that expects them to thrive despite the blatant and incessant injustice. Yet historically, Black females have received minimal acknowledgement in research, praxis, practice, discourse, curriculum, and policies (Collins, 1998, 2000; Patton & Ward, 2016) within institutional settings. Therefore, given that Black female counselor educators and doctoral students in academia experience unique challenges affecting their success and performance (e.g., Haskins et al., 2016), this study attempt to address this gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the shared intersectional experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in CES programs. The goal was to ensure the inclusion of the Black female's unique voice in the construction of strategies to facilitate the development of awareness and cultural sensitivity in CES programs. Despite mission statements, lectures, and discussions supporting the need for diversification in CES programs, the lack of diversity among students as well as faculty members is evidence of a greater systemic influence that may limit understanding the need for interconnectedness and explication of holistic healing, well-being, and shared experiences to move individuals beyond complacency and the unintentional perpetuation of the status quo (Bemak et al., 2008; Laurin et al., 2013), which requires an active decision to maintain ignorance (Mayo, 2004). By identifying the central themes that were identified from Black females' narratives, institutions and departments will have a greater ability to integrate MSJCCs and include cultural worldviews, privilege, and oppression experiences to address the complexities of counselor educator, student, and client

interactions (Ratts et al., 2015).

Significance of the Study

The present study aimed to apply intersectionality to examine the awareness of the shared experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in CES programs. The crux of intersectionality is praxis and theory. It was designed to scrutinize interlocking systems of privilege and oppression and to create strategies that challenge those systems, prioritizing racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism (Aguayo-Romero, 2021). It is significant that intersectionality not only focuses on intersecting social identities but also intersecting systems of privilege and oppression. Although everyone has intersecting social identities, not everyone belongs to historically disparaged groups or endures intersecting systemic oppression (Aguayo-Romero, 2021). Afterall, awareness of intersecting social identities does not determine whether and to what magnitude one experiences oppression (Aguayo-Romero, 2021). Intersectional research centered on privilege and oppression among Black females clarify the uniqueness of the Black female experience (Crenshaw, 1991), which has historically been camouflaged by coaxial identity categories pertaining to race and gender (Cho et al., 2013; Stojek & Fischer, 2013).

The goal of intersectionality in this study was to introduce a comprehensive analysis of the persistence of privilege and oppression (Vamvaka-Tatsi, 2020) as it relates to Black females and to deconstruct the dominant perspective of identity quadrants as described by Ratts et al. (2015). In providing an example of intersectionality of oppression and privilege, the counseling profession is moving past the narrow focus of individual White privilege (McIntosh, 1989) and confirming the presence of structural racism (Aguayo-Romero, 2021) to examining the consequences of interconnected systems of oppression on the mental as well as physical health of Black females (Lewis et al., 2017). Therefore, research must focus on the shared experiences of

marginalized populations (Aguayo-Romero, 2021), such as Black females, to examine the systems that oppress them.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the qualitative research were

1. How do Black females describe privilege and oppression?
2. What are Black female's shared experiences of privilege and oppression within the CES department?
3. What are the shared experiences of privilege and oppression of Black females in their interactions with CES program faculty?
4. What are the shared experiences of privilege and oppression of Black females in their interactions within the learning environment?
5. What is the impact of their experiences in their CES programs on them as Black women?

Assumptions and Limitations

This study gives the participants' perceptions of their experiences. Participants self-selected whether to take part, so it is assumed that only counselor education students who were interested in this topic or who found the topic relevant to their experiences participated in this study. The participants could have responded to me as the researcher to match the influence of my power or to connect with my social identities and perspectives on privilege and oppression. An innate issue within qualitative research is the transferability of findings to other communities and identities (Singh, 2013). Therefore, the study is not exhaustive of all communities related to Black females. Given the small homogeneous sample, researchers and scholars should consider the caution of applying the study's findings to other groups related to the social identities

purposed within this study (i.e., Black females). Future research could use a larger sample from counselor educators and students from a sample stratified over region, size, and type of educational institutions. Though it has been an original feature to assess the shared intersectionality experiences of counselor educators' perceptions of privilege and oppression in the current research, it would also have been useful to examine student perceptions.

Definitions of Terms

The following are definitions of terms used throughout the study:

Black. Individuals who self-identify racially as Black or African American.

Counselor educator. An individual who is an appointed faculty member at a CACREP accredited educational institution and has earned, or will soon earn, a doctoral degree in counselor education or a closely related field.

Female. For the sake of this research refers to women (someone who may or may not have been assigned female gender at birth but identify as a female).

Oppression. Unjust or cruel mental or physical treatment or control over another individual or group. An unfair exercise of authority or power and the imposition of burden. A condition of being weighed down or a sense of heaviness or obstruction in the mind or body. A social act of wrongfully positioning severe restrictions on certain individuals, groups, or institutions.

Privilege. Privilege is automatic benefits, conditions, or circumstances that are unearned and bestowed upon members based on their social identity. It is an immunity, or advantage inherited by or granted to one societal group which exceeds the common advantage of every other group. Privilege is ordinarily invisible to those who have it.

Summary

This qualitative inquiry gives voice to the shared experiences of Black females in CES programs and their unique individual perspectives. Intersectionality provides a lens for awareness and acknowledges the individual as the expert of their own experience. The chapter provided the basis of the call for counselor educators to become aware and to begin practical application of the new additions to MCCs.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is important to explore the current and historical contexts of Black females in CES programs through the literature. This chapter further explores current and historical contexts of multicultural and social justice competencies that are specific to CES, then follows with an examination of the status of social justice awareness in CES programs. It continues with a discussion on the new social justice counseling competencies and then a contrast of actual practice of the standards and guidelines that have been designed to provide new culturally responsive curricular and pedagogical practices to build on the rich culture and history of Black female counselor educators and students.

Self-Awareness

The goal is for counselor educators and their students to acquire competence and self-awareness to provide equity in education (Lee, 2007). Self-awareness is a lifelong process involving critical analysis, immersion into one's community, reading, professional development, and self-reflection (Lee, 2007; Ratts et al., 2015). Self-awareness requires marginalized and privileged and oppressed counselor educators and counselors to take inventory of their own beliefs, biases, and values (Ratts et al., 2015), contemplating the influence of social power and privilege on intersectional experiences and as well as how it can support social change (Chan, 2018; Crenshaw, 1998; Henriques & Manatu-Rupert, 2001; Ratts et al., 2015). Therefore, competent counselor educators and students are in a constant state of honing their attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and actions (AKSA). These competencies should be part of the counselor educator's self-awareness, client worldview, and educator–student relationships, providing a guide for serving oppressed and marginalized communities with competence.

Students and faculty must increase their self-awareness to acknowledge their own biased

beliefs and attitudes that may impact the way they interact with one another and conduct classrooms and counseling sessions (Leach et al., 2010). Counselor educators and their students will need to develop cultural self-empathy, which involves understanding the instinctive response to one's own culture and to the cultures of others, to develop self-awareness (Sodowsky et al., 1997). Consequently, deep self-awareness is needed to facilitate adequate cultural empathy (Sodowsky et al., 1997; Sue et al., 1992), which is the ability to understand student and peer experiences from culturally diverse backgrounds (Ridley & Lingle, 1996, as cited in Gomez-Lanier, 2018). Counselor educators and counseling students will need to integrate self-awareness and cultural empathy as essential elements of culturally sensitive teaching and supervision (Constantine, 2001; Lee, 2007). Though some have challenged the idea that an individual can fully understand another's experiences by imagining themselves in their place (Young, 1997), those who are privileged can learn to see themselves as others see them (La Caze, 2008) and recognize the limitations of traditional methods for understanding others. Experiential learning strategies can promote self-awareness as well as cognitive or rational learning in counselor education programs (Tyler & Guth, 1999).

Awareness as Action

Since identities are constituted through action, counselor educators are empowered to transcend marginalization and oppression in their movement from self-awareness to relationality. Counselor educators must be aware of the impact that effective application of the new MSJCCs has on teachers' attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and student outcomes. Counselor educators should consider the psychological risk involved in discussing privilege and oppression in the classroom (Chan, 2018) while challenging the long-standing institutional practices and policies that maintain the cycle of oppression (Fine et al., 2012). It is imperative that counselor educators act

by acknowledging, educating themselves, and addressing the need to live, model, and teach MSJCCs (Ratts et al. 2015) throughout the CES program to unhinge historical institutional oppression and embrace their current professional identities as educator, ally, and advocate (Fine et al., 2012).

Social Justice

A precise definition of social justice is elusive. To illustrate, Watts (2004) noted that social justice inherently includes a political component and speaks to an active engagement in redressing social inequities, and Bell (1997) discussed social justice in terms of its goals—namely, being a society marked by full and equal participation by all groups. It is clear, however, that the central focus of social justice is an awareness of inequalities, and it is found in the human responses to systemic inequities that serve to marginalize and disenfranchise groups (Vera & Speight, 2003). Commonly, social justice activists focus on forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism (Smith et al., 2003). The most precise definition of social justice as it relates to the counseling professions has been offered by Goodman et al. (2004), who conceptualized the work of social justice as being "the scholarship and professional action designed to change systemic values, structures, policies, and practices, which put individuals at a disadvantage or push them to the margins of society to limit gain and decrease access through self-determination" (p. 795). This definition describes the experience of Black females who have been perpetually disadvantaged and marginalized (Collins, 2008). The MSJCCs illuminated the importance of counselors being aware of the impact of privilege and oppression on mental health as well as the importance of counselors advocating for social justice.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is defined as critical aspects of an individual's identity stemming from

race, ethnicity, language, education, gender, gender identity, religion and spiritual orientation, sexual orientation, physical differences, socioeconomic status, and age (Singh & Yuk Sim Chun, 2010; Sue & Sue, 2008). However, multicultural competence involves more than acquiring didactic knowledge and skills to engage clients from diverse backgrounds (Sodowsky et al., 1997). Multicultural counseling was enriched by Sue et al.'s (1992) development of the MCCs, which was operationalized in 1996 by Arrendondo et al. According to Arrendondo et al.'s MCCs, counselor educators should always be aware of ways that their own cultural background and experiences have influenced their values, attitudes, and biases throughout the counseling process. Counselor educators must learn to recognize their limitations about multicultural competence and expertise as well as their sources of discomfort pertaining to differences between themselves and their students in terms of culture, ethnicity, and race. Thus, MCCs emphasize lifelong learning beyond initial competence (Nelson, 2007). As globalization and immigration trends continue to increase to a culturally heterogeneous society in the United States (Shrestha & Heisler, 2011), the original intention of the MCCs is still just as urgent today as they were on their inception (Sue et al., 1992).

The most common representation of multicultural counseling involves counseling relationships that transcend the barriers of race and ethnicity, so the MCCs are characterized by the development of knowledge, awareness, and skills in direct relationship to one's ability to work in racially and ethnically diverse societies (Abreu et al., 2000; Arredondo et al., 1996; Pieterse et al., 2009). It is important that counselor educators understand the magnitude of the impact, value, and level of change possible for students, counselors, and clients since the development of the MCCs. Multicultural competence has enhanced the educator–student and counselor–client alliance as well as improved perceptions of counselor warmth, increased client

and student retention, and increased trust of therapist expertise in people of color (Smith & Trimble, 2016; Wang & Kim, 2010). However, there appears to be limited literature on the content of multicultural counseling course instruction and documented syllabi of multicultural counseling courses (Abreu et al., 2000; Carter & Pieterse, 2008; Ponterotto, 1997). This dynamic indicates the type of education and supervision approaches emphasized by professors teaching multicultural counseling courses, which is a predictor of MCC (Fietzer et al., 2018).

Privileged and Marginalized Statuses

Individuals experience both privilege and marginalization simultaneously throughout life. These occurrences can be described as quadrants to illustrate the intersection of privileged and marginalized identities among counselors and their clients (Lee, 2007). The quadrants capture a reflection of moments when one prevailing identity is present, though these identities are likely to change between the counselor and client during the counseling session because of each person's fluidity of identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Counselors and clients may even identify with more than one quadrant simultaneously, since they may belong to both a marginalized and a privileged group. Counselors and clients may also find themselves interacting from completely different quadrants than perceived by the other. Moreover, the privileged and marginalized statuses are then categorized into four quadrants that reflect the distinct types of interactions that occur between the counselor and client (Lee, 2007):

1. The privileged counselor and marginalized client, which reflects an alliance existing between a client from a marginalized group and a counselor from a privileged group, in which the counselor has power and privilege status over the client,
2. The privileged counselor and privileged client. In this quadrant both counselor

and client share power and privileged statuses in society,

3. The marginalized counselor and the privileged client. In this relationship the client is the one who holds the status of power and privilege, and
4. the marginalized counselor and the marginalized client; here the counselor and client are both members of a marginalized identity group.

Privilege and Oppression

Research proposes the almost half of the dominant culture in America believe that they experience oppression as often or more than minorities (Jones et al., 2014, 2015). But for an individual's beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, and discriminatory behaviors to be oppressive, they must have power and privilege (David & Derthick, 2017). Biased thinking, feeling, and behaving must be legitimized, protected, and supported by assumptions, norms, standards, institutions, and policies (David & Derthick, 2017). In addition, it is the dominant culture or members of society who have privilege and power that categorize, define, and limit the humanity of individuals belonging to minority groups, while enjoying vast possibilities for their own lives (David & Derthick, 2017). Institutions that are automatically thought of as normal or expected as a fundamental part of society are what provide the majority group with more power and privilege than minorities. Furthermore, if there were no imbalance of power and privilege between groups of people, there would be no oppression.

Privilege

Privilege is the counterpart to oppression (Mullaly, 2010). Although privilege is complex and dynamic, it can be described as automatic conditions and circumstances that are unearned or benefits that are bestowed upon members based on their social identity (McIntosh, 1988, 2013a). Thus, one's chance of being offered opportunities is skewed or altered habitually to the

advantage of the privileged because of the ability that others believe they have (Minarik, 2017). Others have described the process of privilege as opportunity hoarding (Tilly, 1998, 2001) in addition to discussing the power of everyday social networks associated with social identity and similarity emulating historic disputes regarding factors and forces which render inequality as intractable (DiTomaso, 2012).

In the classroom, educators may be more likely to address oppression and marginalization than the role of privilege when preparing culturally competent counselors (Loya, 2011). Privilege is often oversimplified by educators; therefore, students are often unable to determine the role of privilege personally or how it applies to their lives or their narrative of success or failure (Minarik, 2017). This obliviousness is another form of privilege (Jansen, 2005; Mayo, 2004), as they do not need to know the experiences of the oppressed (Tilly, 1998).

Discussions around privilege and oppression in an academic setting also often stimulate various emotional reactions from students (Sue et al., 2009), which can distract from the need to acknowledge and be aware of inequalities and the relationship between privilege, power, oppression, and status (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Many people have a desire to believe that systems are fair and equal (Laurin et al., 2013; McCoy & Major, 2007; McCoy et al., 2013). This leads to the privilege and oppression being continually enacted in day-to-day stereotyping and decision making regarding the distribution of opportunities and resources (Minarik, 2017), as well as the use of inaccurate information and stereotypes that serve as vindication and justifications for privileged or oppressed statuses (Hoffrage & Reimer, 2004). This may serve as a disadvantage to Black females in counselor education programs, since exclusion, poverty, powerlessness, and workplace discrimination have historically been central issues for Black females in the United States (Henriques & Manatu-Rupert, 2001).

The complex dynamics of privilege and oppression are factors facing counselor educators, counseling students, counselors, and their clients. Due to the subtle contemporary forms of privilege and oppression, educators must begin to prepare counseling students to become self-aware and culturally competent to prevent oppressed and marginalized people from being denied access to resources or life chances (Minarik, 2017). These students must work hard in changing the way people view themselves, others, and the world as they continue to strive toward mental health and wellness.

Internalized Privilege

Internalized privilege is revealed when members of the majority group accept false assumptions, stereotypes, and belief in the inherent inferiority of oppressed minority groups and inherent superiority of their own majority or privileged group (David & Derthick, 2017). Internalized privilege creates an unearned sense of entitlement and individuals who internalize privilege and view inferiority and supremacy as being normal and deny the existence of oppression.

Oppression

Oppression is defined as the unjust mental or physical treatment or control by those who possess privilege and power over another individual or groups. Oppression can be viewed as being worse than exploitation because society has rendered these people useless (Young, 2014). In the United States, most oppressed groups are racially marked, though racial exclusion also occurs in countries outside the United States (Jenson, 2000). Other prominent examples consist of specific groups, such as ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQ people, mental and physically disabled persons, elderly people, and women, who are often excluded or treated as though they are invisible. This excludes multiple categories of people from useful participation

in society (Seng et al., 2012). As a result, these groups have endured material deprivation, lack of resources, and extermination. For many individuals, the negative impact of oppression comes at the prohibitive cost of emotional instability, physical impairment, and psychological illness (Chan et al., 2018).

The three levels of oppression are institutional, interpersonal/relational, and internalized (David & Derthick, 2017), each of which may be endured over the course of a lifetime for some people because of their interrelated and overlapping effects. Institutional and interpersonal oppression originate outside of the individual or group; however, once oppression has been internalized, there is no need for the presence of external oppression for one to experience its damage (David & Derthick, 2017).

Institutional Oppression

Institutional oppression is when the false belief of inferiority of oppressed groups and superiority of dominant groups is ingrained in societal institutions such as educational systems, schools, legal systems, police practice, the laws, political power, housing developments and policies, public policies, and media images (David & Derthick, 2017). Dominant individuals and groups are made more powerful and privileged when backed by institutions.

Interpersonal/Relational Oppression

Interpersonal oppression is unveiled when members of the dominant group mistreat or show disrespect to members of the oppressed group (David & Derthick, 2017). It involves powerful and privileged individuals, engaging in biased attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors against another individual, whether intentional or not. Interpersonal oppression is expressed in forms of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination.

Internalized Oppression

Internalized oppression can be found within oppressed individuals who have internalized negative messages about themselves. It occurs when the oppression that has been inflicted on an individual permeates their sense of being and what they believe to be true about themselves. Often more subtle forms of oppression affect the psychological experiences of oppressed groups (Sue et al., 2007; Thompson & Neville, 1999). Microaggressions do not provide a clear, identifiable source leaving the victim to question the reality of oppression (Sue et al., 2007). Like overt oppression, microaggressions produce psychological consequences (Sue, 2010). Negative emotions are often directed inward when the victim is denied an opportunity to confront the source of oppression. Internalized oppression can be observed as oppressed individuals begin to oppress themselves and other oppressed individuals and groups by emanating the oppression they have experienced. In this way, subtle racism and microaggressions contribute to internalized oppression and in turn work to perpetuate oppression (David, 2014).

An oppressed person who has ascended to a position of power has the tendency to highlight their experience of systemic wrongs while not fully realizing the potential for change that the position potentially allows (Shannon, 2020). However, teaching intersectionality encourages students to explore ways that systems of oppression are perpetuated and to understand that individuals exist within interlocking systems of privilege and oppression. Teaching intersectionality requires self-awareness, self-reflection, and an intentional examination of the term itself. It requires one to contemplate the multiple marginalized and shared intersectional experiences that have been silenced in both privileged and oppressed communities and allow students the opportunities to be present in classrooms disseminating knowledge as equal contributors amongst their peers and the professor (Shannon, 2020).

Challenges Integrating Multiculturalism in Counselor Education

CES must extend beyond classroom instruction, integrating multicultural and social justice considerations into the everyday lives of students by highlighting the importance of bridging classroom knowledge and real-world settings (Collins & Pieterse, 2007). The likelihood of creating lasting learning outcomes might be increased by stretching student knowledge of MSJCC across and beyond academic coursework (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004; Coleman, 2006; Collins & Pieterse, 2007; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Pompa, 2002) toward an experiential and collaborative approach to education and supervision (Shannon, 2020). It is only then that helpers can move intentionally and purposefully toward social action.

Many graduate-level counseling and training programs require multicultural course work, yet the issues of power, privilege, oppression, and social justice may not be integrated across the curriculum (Motulsky et al., 2014). Counselor educators who instruct courses related to multicultural issues are called to be continuously aware of their own identities and to ensure they have adequate knowledge to confront a variety of challenges. Despite best intentions, they may still lack continuity of ethical decision making and may not always be able to determine the most effective way to integrate multiculturalism into teaching and supervision (Chan et al., 2018). A significant component to providing effective multicultural services is continued training and education on ethics (Fier & Ramset, 2005).

Competencies in Counselor Training in Context

Over the last four decades, the field of counseling has achieved success in adapting to the needs of an ever-diversifying world and to refocusing the paradigm of wellness toward multiculturalism and social justice advocacy (Pieterse et al., 2009; Sue et al., 2019). The MCCs were revised to include the MSJCCs (Ratts et al., 2015) and adopted by the ACA in 2015, which

provided a framework to integrate the multicultural and social justice competencies into CES. This framework highlights the intersection of identities and the dynamics of privilege and marginalization that directly affect counselor education. Developmental domains also reflect the multiple layers that lead to multicultural and social justice competence: (a) counselor self-awareness, (b) client worldview, (c) supervisory relationship, and (d) supervision and advocacy interventions. The developmental domains of MSJCC also include AKSA (Pieterse et al., 2009). Many scholars have suggested that although a counselor might have adequate AKS, the action phase is what maximizes influence of the counseling intervention (Arredondo et al., 1996; Ivey et al., 2010; Nassar-McMillan, 2014), but it is often left out.

In addition to MCCs, the ACA code of ethics preamble provides the professional values that counselors are to cultivate, such as enhancing human development over a lifetime; honoring diversity; embracing multiculturalism in support of uniqueness, potential, dignity, and worth; promoting social justice; practicing in a competent and ethical way; and safeguarding the integrity of the counseling relationship. The code of ethics also provides the foundational principles for ethical behavior and decision-making, which are autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, fidelity, and veracity. Counselor educators have been ethically trained to do no harm and to help individuals at all levels of society, regardless of their race, gender, sexual identity, culture, religion, language, lifestyle, or value system (ACA, 2014). Therefore, counselor educators and counseling students need to develop an awareness of their own thoughts, feelings, and biases and to challenge inappropriate reactions to others, especially as they broach issues of inequality and social justice while addressing mental health (Mackie & Boucher, 2017). Counselors and counselor educators should also show respect for individuality and reflect greater awareness of the social location of students and supervisees (Chow et al., 2015). To do so,

counselors need to acquire knowledge of their own cultural and racial heritage and how it affects their definitions and their biases and approach to the counseling process.

Skilled counselors must also be knowledgeable about their differences in communication styles, which requires consultation, education, and training that will improve their effectiveness and understanding of populations that are culturally different and to provide resources and to refer clients out to more qualified practitioners when needed (Arredondo et al., 1996)Counselors are to maintain awareness of preconceived notions and positive and negative emotional reactions to opposing attitudes and beliefs that may be harmful to the counseling relationship. Counselors must also be non-judgmental regarding their client's worldviews. Obtaining specific knowledge about their client's background, heritage, and life experiences, as well as ways that culture, ethnicity, and race may affect the manifestation of help seeking behavior, mental illness, personality formation, vocational choices, and the counselor's choice of a counseling approach for each client. Counselors should also maintain knowledge of sociopolitical influences which may impinge on the life of minorities.

Further, counselors who are culturally skilled must be familiar with relevant research concerning mental disorders that may affect various ethnic and racial groups and maintain cross-cultural skills for effective counseling practice (Arredondo et al., 1996). Counselors should also be actively involved with people of different heritages outside the scope of counseling. Beliefs and attitudes concerning appropriate intervention strategies for clients who speak foreign languages and for those of differing religious and spiritual backgrounds should be chosen with respect and value. Counselors should be aware of the client's family structure, residence, hierarchies, diverse cultural perspectives, and community resources. Counselors are to have clear and explicit understanding and knowledge of the therapeutic process regarding the client's

cultural group and values. They must also develop an awareness of institutional barriers that limit minority access to mental health services, discriminatory practices at the community and social levels that may affect the client's psychological welfare, and to be mindful of the client's cultural and linguistic characteristics and potential bias when selecting assessment instruments, when using procedures, and when interpreting findings.

Finally, counselors who are culturally skilled engage in accurate and appropriate verbal and nonverbal forms of communication and can apply various therapeutic approaches, exercise institutional intervention skills to help their clients, and help them avoid inappropriately personalizing problems (Sue et al., 1982). Culturally skilled helpers are not against pursuing consultation with religious and spiritual leaders, practitioners, or traditional healers when treating clients who are culturally different. They also take responsibility for allowing the client to interact in the language of their choice, therefore, obtaining a culturally knowledgeable and professional translator if necessary or refer to a competent counselor who speaks the client's requested language. Counselors who are culturally skilled are to obtain training and expertise of traditional testing and assessment instruments and be aware of their cultural limitations and educate their clients regarding the process of therapeutic interventions, expectations, counselor orientation, goals, and legal rights. Culturally skilled counselors are to work to eliminate bias, discrimination, and prejudice when providing evaluations and interventions. They should also be sensitive to issues of elitism, heterosexism, oppression, racism, and sexism.

It is vital that counselor training address issues of inequality and social justice as a foundational concept in addressing mental health. However, few of the current paradigms of counseling and CES appear well equipped to help counselors and counseling trainees (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). But the counseling profession has recently begun to make an explicit

effort to mandate social justice orientation in counselor education programs (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2009; Ratts et al., 2016; Toporek et al., 2009) in response to systemic inequalities that have historically hindered the success of marginalized and disenfranchised minorities (Vera & Speight, 2003). Multiculturalism and social justice can affect counselor training and practice (Aldarondo, 2007), making these two constructs integral to CES (Goodman et al., 2015). However, it is critical that the infusion of multiculturalism and social justice concepts move beyond the classroom platform into areas of practicum, supervision, and fieldwork experience, during the cultivation of counselor identity and professional development (Bemak et al., 2011).

The goal of CES programs is to produce counselor educators who are competent to provide effective and ethical service to diverse students and clients (ACES, 2011). Counselor educators and their students both may benefit from integrating the MSJCC model to conceptualize faculty education, supervision, and counseling interventions. A counselor educator's lack of multicultural and social justice knowledge as well as awareness of power differentials act jointly to silence and demoralize marginalized students (Norton & Coleman, 2003). Counselor educators must initiate conversations about race and culture within the classroom (Norton & Coleman, 2003). An educator who lacks self-awareness may fail to take advantage of opportunities to integrate multicultural and social justice dynamics. Counselors may also lack formal training or experience, which may cause some of them to overlook opportunities for growth or bonding. Furthermore, perceived similar cultural backgrounds or identities may also cause counselor ineffectiveness (Fickling et al., 2019). It is important to highlight the relevance of the integration of multicultural and social justice counseling competencies in CES programs to balance the effects of privilege and oppression.

Although there has been an increase in literature on MCC in counselor education,

integrating MSJCCs is still in its infancy. Counselor educators continue to face the challenge of addressing, facilitating, and integrating social justice issues (Tohidian & Quek, 2017), which may result in ineffective strategic planning and implementation of the counseling competencies (Spellman et al., 2021). Inaction on the part of counselor educators could also confirm marginalized and oppressed individuals' long-held inference that they do not belong and that they are intellectually inferior (Sue et al., 2008).

CACREP and Related Studies

The CACREP was established in 1981 by the American Personnel and Guidance Association, which in 1983 changed its name to the ACA. CACREP is the accrediting body for master's and doctoral-level counseling programs in counseling. The mission that CACREP has adhered to since its inception is to promote professionally competent practitioners by developing preparation standards, encouraging excellence in program excellence, and by the accrediting of professional preparation programs. CACREP holds core values such as the advancement of the counseling profession through quality and excellence, serving responsibly to protect the public, promoting openness to change, collaboration, and growth, as well as constructing and reinforcing standards that reflect systemic needs, encouraging diversity of instructional approaches and strategies, and supporting program improvement and best practices that are consistent with this mission (D'Andrea et al., 1991).

According to CACREP (2001) standards, multiculturalism and social justice are to be viewed as fundamental elements of an accredited program's curriculum, and counselors' roles may be found in social justice, advocacy, or conflict resolution. Counselors are to culturally become self-aware, developing awareness of the nature of biases, prejudices, and the processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination. The integration of theories of

multicultural counseling, identity development, and multicultural competencies is necessary to address culturally supported behaviors that may be detrimental to the growth of the human spirit, mind, or body (CACREP, 2001, p. 13). However, the focus on cultural and individual diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice has remained the core requirements of counselor training since the publication of the CACREP standards in 1988.

CACREP standards are continually revised for accreditation (1988, 1994, 2001, 2009, and 2016), and the field of professional counseling has continued to grow and change to modify itself and keep pace with a dynamic and increasingly diverse society. Social justice has evolved as the fifth force of counseling paradigms (Ratts, 2009) and includes counselor leadership, client and community empowerment, action, advocacy, and the joining of personal and professional allies (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Ratts et al., 2015; Toporek & Daniels, 2018). Social justice counseling acclimates students to multicultural issues and diverse topics that may put them in uncomfortable situations when engaging diverse students (Nassar & Singh, 2019). The inclusion of social justice in counselor education helps to prepare helpers for multicultural and social justice resistance.

Despite these evolving standards, there is a need for CACREP to offer explicit training standards for counselor educators to gain knowledge, skills, and practice for social justice outcomes for students. Social justice must be integrated into every aspect of CES, providing students with the skills to teach in a culturally informed and affirming context, which may be in opposition to the majority culture (Dollarhide & Owen, 2019), identifying oppression at every level (institutional , interpersonal, and internalized) and agency (cultural, intrapersonal strengths, goals, supports, and interpersonal interactions), which may impact an individual's life and their decision making (Dollarhide et al., 2021). Supervisors are in a unique position to respond to

various cultures (regional, national, and global), regarding personal experience and clinical practice (Dollarhide et al, 2016). Counselor educators facilitate students at a critical point of transition amid the student's personal, professional, and social justice identity development, guiding them as they move from their academic to professional career (Thacker, 2019).

Current Empirical Literature Relevant to Research Questions

Social Identity

Social identity indicates how a person views themself as an individual, how they are viewed as a member of a group, and how they are viewed by others (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011). It is who a person is regarding their mental, physical, and social characteristics. Social identity frames intellectual beliefs, emotional connection, and behavior, likewise, the sense of belonging to a particular category of people or being distinguished by certain labels is influenced by many factors and begins early in life (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011)

Social identity has numerous implications for the people who claim their identity and for others who view them as members of distinct categories. In the United States, the Black female slave was not considered a woman or feminine because of her alleged masculinity (Beckles, 1999) in an attempt to defeminize enslaved Black females and characterize femininity as the embodiment of White women (Pasek et al., 2020). According to Morton, racial and discriminatory representations of Black womanhood is rooted in the antebellum era and centered around four central figures: the "inept domestic servant" (the mammy), the domineering matriarch, the sex object (the Jezebel), and the tragic mulatto (Morton, 1985).

Students in counseling programs hold a variety of salient identities, including race and ethnicity, gender identity, sex, affectional and sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, social class, and religious/spiritual identity. To fully explore identity, one must examine the

intersection of privilege and oppression (Chan et al., 2018). Being a member of both an oppressive and an oppressed group is not uncommon, resulting in an individual experiencing both the benefits of privilege and the negative impact of oppression simultaneously. Frequently in counselor training programs, educators consider multiple identities when conceptualizing clients but fail to highlight their intersections, often positioning social and cultural identities in a mutually exclusive manner (Davis, 2014). Counselor educators supplement a variety of representations with these multiple social identities in the context of the classroom but place singular emphasis on identity, which obscures intersections and increases salience of prescriptive practices (Yoon et al., 2014).

Black Females

The term *Black* is a distinctive racial classification of people of African descent who have expanded cross-culturally in collective communities around the world (Collins, 1990/2000).The phrase “Black female” evokes an intricate and complex intersection of race, culture, gender, and class in the Americas. Black females continue to be targets for racial oppression and gender inequality among other disparities regardless of their upbringing or acquired level of expertise. In addition to the intersectional experiences of privilege and oppression, Black females may also endure all three levels of oppression simultaneously—racism, discrimination, and marginalization—without consciousness of the cost of their perseverance. Prolonged exposure to mainstream narratives in American institutions have historically rendered Black females invisible and encouraged the adoption of deficient perspectives of themselves as students and scholars (Haynes et al., 2016).

Privilege and oppression pose a threat to the Black females’ educational growth as well as to how they are viewed, treated, and provided opportunities by educators (Morris, 2016).

Historically, Black females have been underrepresented in academia and continue to bear the disproportionate brunt of historical legacies that limit access to essential opportunities and neglected experiences of high-achieving and gifted Black females in educational settings (Ford et al., 2018; Evans-Winters, 2014). But there is a lack of literature centered on the Black female's perspective of their experiences from the intersection of privilege and oppression. Black females experience education in similar and different ways as Black males and White females; therefore, their voice must be heard to employ culturally relevant interventions and practices to be used by all educators (Ford et al., 2017). These voices must be heard through an intersectional lens, not a single axis lens, which is the typical discourse in relation to the Black male and female experience. The Black female experience is distinctive in culture and intersectionality that distinguishes the multiple ways that Black females experience oppression (Ford et al., 2018).

Intersectionality of Black Females

Although this study will contribute to larger discourses about Black females in CES programs collectively, the literature is scant regarding Black females as they relate to the study of intersectionality (Haynes, 2020). The existing race and gender models are inadequate to study Black females because they do not account for intragroup differences. But it is difficult to understand the experiences and identity development of Black females without first understanding the intersection of race and gender identities as a dynamic of social identity (Thomas et al., 2011).

Structural intersectionality accentuates multiple forms of structural oppression that have shaped the unique experiences of Black females (Crenshaw, 1991; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Robinson, 2013), which have been obscured by overlapping identity categories such as Black male and White female (Cho et al., 2013; Stojek & Fischer, 2013). Black women have

cultivated a complex awareness of their societal status that is rooted in Black feminist ideologies, which has helped them to challenge and resist intersectional oppression and name the systems of power that are largely responsible for the adversity they have endured (Collins, 2000). Black feminists scrutinize the negative images of Black womanhood and the interlocking systems of oppression (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Langston, 1998). Black feminism was developed to fill a gap left by the focus on gender oppression with disregard for race, class, or sexual orientation (Beal, 1995; Hooks, 1984; Lorde 1995). Black females began to articulate experiential knowledge into an alternative philosophy capable of empowering Black female scholars to place themselves and their educational experiences at the center of research, disrupting Eurocentric traditions of analysis and theory regarding Black females (Collins, 2000; Hooks, 1984), but because of the pervasive nature of structural oppression, long-standing structures of knowledge validation persist.

Black female students describe feeling ignored, marginalized, patronized, silenced, invisible, and isolated during classroom discussions and only being acknowledged for a minority perspective (Allen, 2000). Black female graduate students receive unfair ratings in their teaching evaluations and feel as if they are being judged as being unqualified, confrontational, and bad according to stereotypical and prejudice attitudes (Johnson-Bailey, 2004), jeopardizing Black female graduate students' participation, recruitment, retention, and mentorship opportunities, limiting accessibility and support from faculty (Patton, 2009). Traditionally, Black women in academia have not been able to challenge domination or speak against the status quo concerning the oppression of Black females' without fear of consequences. The outcome of such fear and avoidance preserves the oppressor's power, certainty, confidence, and privilege (Mayo, 2004). However, structural intersectionality illuminates hidden forms of domination that operate in

explicit contexts to invoke structural power on Black females (Haynes, 2020), moving the burden of discomfort and uncertainty onto the oppressor to confront the problem of systemic privilege and oppression and toward a commitment to advance as allies against injustice (Mayo, 2004).

In addition to the experiences of Black female students, Black female faculty members are persistently underrepresented in tenured positions as well as positions of leadership, such as dean or university president (Laursen & Austin, 2020). Despite increasing the number of Black females with PhDs, Black females continue to face structural and institutional barriers throughout the tenure process, including the endurance of day-to-day microaggressions from faculty and students, research invalidation, and devaluation of service contributions (Rucks-Ahidiana, 2021). Black females have experienced the long-term stress of navigating discrimination, often having to hide cultural aspects of themselves to blend in with those of the dominant culture or making subtle, temporary changes of voice and behavior when expressing themselves (e.g., code-switching) in the presence of majority group members. Black females who have completed the PhD level CES programs may be viewed as being successful, high achievers, having overcome adversity and risen above injustice. This perspective may cause others who lack awareness of the constraint of oppression and the cost of perseverance to overlook the insidious intersectional experiences of Black female scholars.

Advocacy. Institutional leaders need to design support structures to gain a nuanced understanding of the Black females' daily existence in higher education (Edward & Thompson, 2016; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013). Black female students may also need help finding support and developing coping strategies to counter their challenging experiences (Shavers & Moore, 2019). It is also helpful for counselor educators to reach out to these students in nontraditional ways,

such as collaboration, outreach, or consultation to engage Black females as well as combat marginalization (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015). Further, counselor educators can become advocates to ensure that support programs exist on campus, which could help Black females transcend the challenges they face throughout the program (Shavers & Moore, 2019). Connecting these students to other Black females who are completing their doctoral degree may provide important insights for Black females who have just begun their doctoral journey.

It is imperative that counselor educators and supervisors be prepared for the role of social justice advocate. Prior to engagement with students, counselor educators must cultivate a sense of perspicacity to recognize and begin the process of constructing strategies to embrace awareness and cultural sensitivity. Given the harm inflicted on marginalized groups through the abuse of privilege, the development of a solid foundation for social justice advocacy work must be laid by CES programs, and biased curriculums, attitudes, behaviors, policies, and practices must be ameliorated (Sue et al., 2019).

Summary

Intersectionality as a theoretical framework and interpretive thematic analysis situates the current study with tools for best practices to meet the research questions and phenomenon of interest. Currently, much of the literature that seeks to understand privilege, oppression, and its resulting complexity is primarily conceptual literature (Haskins & Singh, 2015). Thematic analysis that is centered on the shared experiences of Black females is critical, particularly in the current sociopolitical context of the United States.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This qualitative research involved thematic analysis to examine the shared intersectional experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in CES programs. The goal was to

ensure the inclusion of the Black female's unique voice in the construction of strategies to facilitate the development of awareness and cultural sensitivity in CES programs. The theoretical frameworks in this research study placed Black female experiences at the center of the research analysis, ensuring they were positioned through the intersectional lens of race and gender. By identifying the central themes from Black females' narratives, institutions and departments will have a greater ability to align with the ethical requirement of the integration of multicultural and social justice counseling constructs in the MSJCC to include cultural worldviews, privilege, and oppression experiences to address the complexities of counselor educator, student, and client interactions (Ratts et al., 2015).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research to uncover both relevant and uncommon themes while gaining an understanding of the shared intersectional experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in counselor education and supervision programs.

1. How do Black females in CES programs describe privilege and oppression?
2. What are Black female's shared experiences of privilege and oppression within the CES department?
3. What are the shared experiences of privilege and oppression of Black females in their interactions with CES program faculty?
4. What are the shared experiences of privilege and oppression of Black females in their interactions within the learning environment?
5. What is the impact of their experiences in their CES programs on them as Black women?

Research Design

Qualitative, thematic analysis was used to examine the shared intersectional experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in CES programs. This design has provided a rich understanding and meaning of everyday experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). When examining the choice of qualitative design, it is important to discuss why a thematic analysis was the best approach for this study rather than other qualitative methods (McLeod, 2011). Since this study sought to examine multiple participants' views on the impact of service-learning, I ruled out case studies because they would have limited me to a single participant's experience (Holloway & Tordes, 2003). Since I was examining the cultural characteristics of the participants and not the culture of the locations visited, I also eliminated an ethnographic approach. Finally, I eliminated grounded theory because I did not intend to develop a new theory. The main criterion for selecting an approach was its ability to find the common meaning among individuals who had a shared experience or phenomenon, which would help fill a gap that has not been adequately explored. Therefore, thematic analysis allowed for the examination of the lived experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in CES programs.

Participants

For this study, the target population was Black female students and recent graduates of CACREP-accredited CES programs. The maximum number of final participants was set at 10 per the guidelines set forth for qualitative phenomenological research designs (Creswell, 2007). IRB approval was obtained prior to contacting any participants July 18, 2022) Approval was also obtained to record and publish the findings.

Role of the Researcher

In this qualitative study, I was the human instrument through which all data were collected and analyzed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As the researcher, it is important to identify my role in the research and any potential bias that could have influenced the data collection and analysis (Corbin et al., 2015). The researcher must continually reflect on personal perceptions that can influence the process and interpretation of data collected during interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Procedures

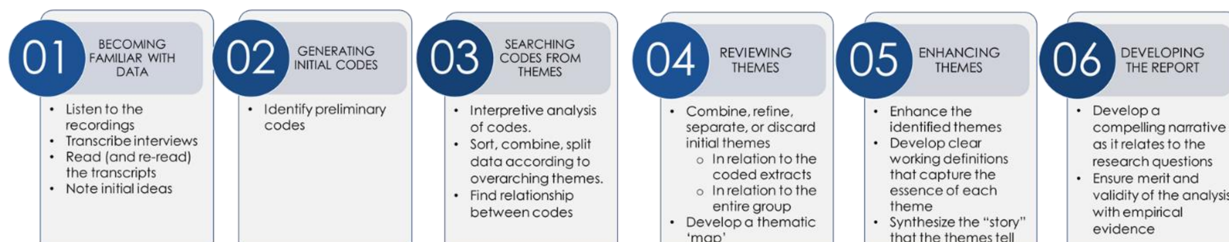
I sought to explore shared experiences of a phenomenon; therefore, I conducted semi-structured interviews. This form of interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue, and the interviewer can modify the questions and probe the light of the participants' responses (Newcomer et al., 2015). The interviews began with establishing a rapport with the participant and establishing the framework for the participant's experience. My objective was to have the participants describe their experiences in context. This was achieved by centering on the topic of interest and including questions using "how" and avoiding the use of "why" to encourage participants to reconstruct the event and position it into the context of their experience. For example, "How would you define privilege?" The next few questions focused on the reconstruction of details of the participants' experience of the phenomena within the context in which it occurred. Finally, the last several questions focused on the internalization of privilege and oppression. The last question was designed to provide some closure to the interview while leaving the participant feeling empowered, heard, and appreciative of the participation experience.

Data Analysis Procedures

The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim (Smith et al., 2009). I incorporated a reflexive process of reading and re-reading the data as needed, paying attention to themes for meanings throughout the analysis process (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Thematic methods do not have a definitive algorithm; however, I adapted Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-phase approach of thematic analysis for this study (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Steps of Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis



The first step in Braun and Clarke's (2006) analysis was to listen to and transcribe the recordings, then read and re-read it to become intimately familiar with the data. Some coding may begin in this stage while becoming increasingly familiar with the data. The second step was coding each participant's data while keeping in mind the research questions. It was important to identify and code aspects of the participants' experiences that were relevant to the research questions. In Braun and Clarke's third step, the codes were placed into potential categories of significance or themes related to the research question guiding the study (Moustakas, 1994). The next step was continued review and analysis of the narratives to identify the themes that connect shared experiences of the participants. The next step was to enhance the identified themes by developing clear working definitions that capture the essence of each theme. All these steps make it possible to synthesize the narrative characterized by the themes. Finally, there is the

development of a compelling narrative as it relates to research questions.

Trustworthiness

It is important in qualitative and interpretive research to be trustworthy. Trustworthiness describes the degree to which the researcher's interpretations of the interviews accurately reflect the perspectives of the participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2007; Morrow, 2005). Four dimensions of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) must be assessed to ensure that the veracity of the claims is robust. To promote trustworthiness, the researcher used member checking for participant validation. Member checking involved returning the results to each participant to check for accuracy, quality, and resonance with their experiences. This technique is helpful in assuring that the analysis is credible, and the interpretations of the interviews accurately reflect the perspectives of the participant. (Lincoln & Guba, 2007).

Credibility

Credibility is confidence in the findings of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Strategies employed were prolonged engagement and persistently exploring the experiences of the participants. Thoughtful questions were asked regarding experiences and perceptions of privilege and oppression as well as intersectionality. Participants were also prompted to support their statements with pointed examples, and probes for additional reflections. I studied these data until theories were identified and connections were formulated.

Member checking was also employed to allow the participants to verify that the interpretations accurately reflect their perspective. Member checking involved returning the proposed results to each participant to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Reflexivity helps to position the interviewer so that the participants to be able to express

themselves without any distortion and without fear of prosecution. The reflexive process is also critical because it allows the researcher to examine and expand explicit awareness of themselves and relates to the degree of influence that the researcher intentionally or unintentionally exerts on the findings. Therefore, it is important to incorporate a reflexivity statement in the thematic analysis which includes historical information, positionality, beliefs, and ambitions that may have inspired the interest in the research focus (Cousin 2009). The statement also highlights the impact of individual experiences, expectations, and biases.

Transferability

It is important for the researcher to provide deep descriptions of the researcher, participants, methods, and results to allow the reader to discern is the methods and principles can be applied in other settings, populations, or contexts; this is called transferability (Morrow, 2005).

Dependability

Ensuring that the research methods are consistent and reliable provides dependability of research methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, documentation of the audits and journaling activities related to conducting this study was crucial (Morrow, 2005).

Confirmability

The researcher is a part of the research process and is undeniably subjective (Morrow, 2005). The audit trail augments confirmability as it helps to establish that the interpretations are true to the participants' experiences and are expressly derived from the data.

Proximity to Research

I identify as a Black female. My minoritized class, ability, and status position me as well matched to analyze and embody Kimberly Crenshaw's conceptualization of the intersectional

experiences of Black females in counselor education programs. Our identities are interlinked and are reflected in doing the study. How I identify my position is the way I am viewed by others, as a marginalized Black female and privileged counselor and counselor educator. Since not all Black females experience oppression in the same way, I take with me the intersectional experiences of each woman. The nature of my work is to establish relational safety and to create authentic safe spaces where knowledge is co-constructed. In this study, I acknowledge that because of intersectional privilege and oppression dynamics, Black females are often unacknowledged, underrepresented, and are faced with social inequality in academia (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Many of these Black females have been silenced and pushed to the fringes of a society that expects them to thrive despite the blatant and incessant injustice (Shannon, 2020; Lloyd-Jones, 2009). I am grateful for the opportunity to center my work on privilege and oppression as it pertains to Black females, using an intersectional framework. I am hopeful that my work shines a light on Black females and redirects the narrative toward an anti-oppressive and liberating approach to counseling and counselor education by helping counselor educators in CES programs develop an awareness of the Black female's intersectional experiences of privilege and oppression and the skills that are needed to impact their workplace, communities, and the world.

Reflexivity Statement

In qualitative research, reflexivity is being aware of the researcher's influence on the research process (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). Experiencing reflexivity as a thematic analysis researcher is intricate, time-consuming, and often uncomfortable. Depicting the work of Heidegger, the experience and expression of reflexivity is acknowledged as a sense of being and shared analytic space that participants and researchers occupy.

There have been times in my life that I have not felt welcome or accepted by those around me. I grew up in a small town in Maryland, where Black female family members and close friends have experienced varying forms of gender and racially motivated oppression, oppressive classroom environments, and daily microaggressions. I made the choice at an early age to be oblivious of the abuse of privilege and oppression to avoid a toll on my mental and emotional well-being. For many years, I did not even realize that I had been marginalized in ways that I did not understand fully because it had become a familiar way of being. But in March 2021 during a week-long intensive at Liberty University my consciousness and experience merged. I became critically aware of the depth and breadth of privilege, oppression, and social injustice; I was able to synthesize this awareness as forms of privilege and oppression that I had not previously acknowledged. During this time of reflection and in the months afterwards, I became acutely aware of the intersectionality of privilege and oppression and how privilege manifests a sense of security and esteem that acts as a buffer to the self-doubt, anxiety, and isolation that silenced me in the past. I began to reflect on my own privileged and oppressed statuses as I realized how the two constructs intersect with those of other individuals. I have been able to overcome multiple barriers in preparation for my life's calling and as I prepare myself to live and work successfully in a society that can be hostile, judgmental, and oppressive at times.

From the perspective of a Black female, privilege means that I do not have the advantages associated with the majority culture. It means that I may experience racism and gender inequality. It means that I am a potential advocate for those in marginalized groups where I have privilege and that I am privileged and/or marginalized in varying circumstances. As a woman I may experience sexism, yet Black lesbian females will be at risk of experiencing sexism, racism, and homophobia. As a human being, I have more than one characteristic that is

subject to discrimination or hostility. For this reason, it is important to learn to listen to others and respect people when they decide to share their lives with me. This is what has motivated me to conduct this research. It is a means of giving voice to the uniqueness of one's intersectionality and to encourage those who have not learned to use their privileges as a buffer to their oppression.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the thematic analysis method used to answer the research question. This chapter also included the research design, which encompasses the participants, the role of the researcher, and the process. There was also an explanation of the essential practice of establishing trustworthiness of the research. The next chapter will detail the results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Chapter 4 presents a detailed examination of the thematic analysis performed to identify the themes and subthemes that represent the experiences of privilege and oppression of Black females in doctoral CES programs. This chapter describes the focus of the research, the methodology, and the sample as well as an overview of the procedure and data analysis. Additionally, the themes, associated subthemes, and other items of interest will be provided with supporting verbatim quotations from the data.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge of the experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in CES programs. By examining the Black female's unique voice will help to construct strategies to facilitate the development of awareness and cultural sensitivity in CES programs. By identifying the central themes in the Black females' narratives, institutions and departments will have a greater ability to integrate multicultural and social justice counseling constructs of the MSJCC by including cultural worldviews, privilege, and oppression experiences to address the complexities of counselor educator, student, and client interactions (Ratts et al., 2015).

Sample

As discussed in Chapter 3, potential participants for this study consisted of Black female students and recent graduates of CACREP-accredited CES programs. This was a purposefully selected sample. IRB approval was obtained on July 18, 2022, along with permission to record and publish the findings, before sending the recruitment letter and informed consent documents to potential participants via email. Of the potential participants, four students indicated their interest in participating in the study by returning the informed consent document. After ensuring

that they met the study criteria, I contacted the four participants to set up times for them to participate in a video interview of focus group. All four participants opted to participate in the individual interview.

Research Methodology

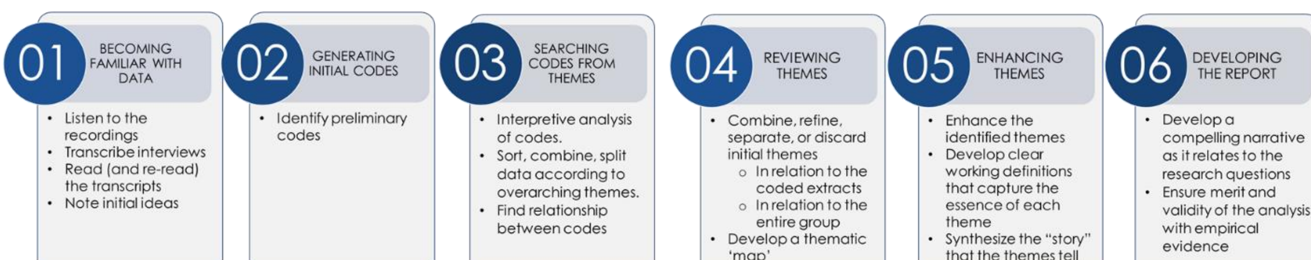
Data for this study were gathered through individual interviews using Zoom video conferencing. All interviews were audiotaped, and the interviews were transcribed into verbatim transcripts using Otter.ai transcription software. To confirm the accuracy of the transcription, I listened to each audio recording of the individual interviews to clarify any content the software may have overlooked or transcribed incorrectly. After participants completed the member check, I reviewed the themes and subthemes multiple times. During the review, commonalities among the data were identified, allowing for the themes and subthemes to become more defined with each iteration. As the codes and data extracts were analyzed, I generated multiple thematic maps, which were reviewed and revised over time. After developing each theme and subtheme, a thorough review to establish accuracy was conducted, leading to a comprehensive thematic analysis of the data.

Data Analysis

I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis (see Figure 1). First, I became familiar with the data. Next, I coded the individual data. After this, I searched for and coded themes and developed a thematic map. I reviewed these themes again and revised the thematic map several times. Finally, I worked with my dissertation chair and another colleague to triangulate the data and generate a report.

Figure 2

Steps of Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis

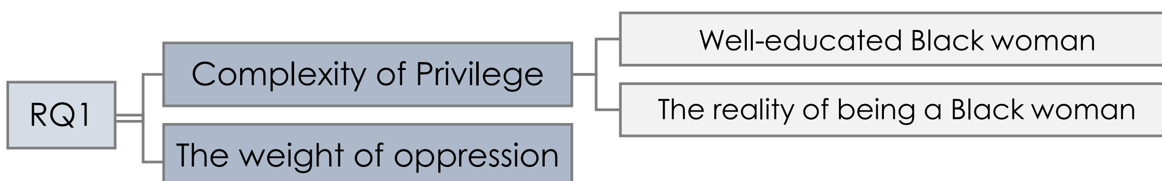


Research Question 1

The first two questions of the interview focused on the participants' overall perceptions of privilege and oppression. Specifically, participants discussed their perceptions of privilege and oppression as well as how their past experiences have shaped their views of privilege and oppression. Upon analysis, I found two themes, which were broken down into subthemes where appropriate. The two themes were the complexity of privilege and the weight of oppression. These themes and subthemes will be further discussed in the following section

Figure 3

Thematic map for research question 1.



Theme 1: Complexity of Privilege

As participants discussed their perceptions of privilege, many discussed that privilege was contextual. They noted that their general view of privilege was negative because they

associated it with the dominant culture. But as they processed their feelings, they discussed how they do possess privilege in some areas of their lives, particularly due to their education status. However, participants also felt that the lack of privilege afforded them as Black women overshadowed the access afforded to them by their educational privilege.

Subtheme 1.1: Well-Educated Black Woman

The participants discussed the importance of being a well-educated Black woman. Many participants viewed this as an opportunity to gain access to an area of privilege otherwise closed to them. As Elaine noted:

> When I was younger … the adage was, we were so poor we didn't know you were poor. So … I was privileged to go to college, out of my family and my siblings. I gained more privileges … it opened more doors to me. But I feel I have privileges … my education doesn't necessarily carry over [into other areas].

Other participants noted that they were not always aware that their education did provide them with some level of privilege. As Haniah explained

> I didn't realize that I had privilege…when I think about…going to school I see now how much of a privilege it is. I didn't see that until getting into higher education, getting into college, and getting into grad school. And so, I think being away from my community … and doing something else that's supposed to be exclusive. Everybody gets to have an opportunity to make a password and be very successful. And so, being away and moving into that pathway where I'm empowered, I can be in higher education.

Haniah also noted the importance of using the privilege that she does have to help others who lack privilege in those areas:

> The dominant culture is privileged. I have a couple of areas of privilege, but not too

> much. Just being in this program, being a doctoral student is a privilege, and I don't take it lightly, I think it's important to use our privilege to help support people who are not privileged in those areas and to help create community among other Black women who are involved.

Finally, Beverly discussed how the difficulty in accessing privileged spaces allowed her to recognize the importance of the privilege afforded her as an educated Black woman.

> You are not viewed by society in a way that would just allow you to be in these privileged spaces … so it's still not going to be as easy and fluid … because you're a Black woman … and so it’s very much influenced the way that I operate as a person in all areas of my life. And it’s humbled me also in a sense because it allows me to be able to acknowledge that in a certain sense of the word or in certain context, I have what could be viewed as privilege. So, it allows me to be able to acknowledge that, to voice that to other people, and to use that as a platform to say or to explain and expand on the fact that yes, I you know, I am very successful. I am very well educated.

Subtheme 1.2: The reality of being a Black woman.

As participants discussed areas of privilege, the participants uniformly described their privilege within the context of their everyday experiences as Black women. As a result, while they viewed themselves as privileged in areas, participants also noted that they saw privilege as belonging to others and not to them. This in turn often overshadowed any benefit achieved by their educational privilege. As Beverly noted:

> Even though I may have privilege in these areas that doesn't undermine or take away from the fact that I still have experiences that are very unique, because I'm living my life every day as a Black woman. That often takes away from any experience that originally

starts out as privileged.

Michelle discussed the extra sacrifices required of her as a Black woman to gain the same level of access that was given to non-minority communities. She stated,

> I would describe privilege as white privilege, the privilege given to non-minority communities within America. So, my experiences as a Black woman in society, growing up in a predominantly White areas, and institutions all my life have shaped my view on privilege and oppression to where it is. It's constant. It's around me, I see it more predominantly now, more than in my youth. And I see the sacrifices that you know, we've had to make as Black women and continue to make in life to have a seat at the table.

Similarly, Beverly noted that while she had access to educational spaces, she also had to sacrifice to maintain her place in that space.

> Even before I was doing this for myself, I was always positioned and taught that I had to work harder, or I had to, you know, put in XY and Z efforts and I didn't have the space or the opportunity to joke around or to you know, not take every experience or opportunity that was made available to me seriously.

Finally, Elaine discussed how she believes that privilege belonged to others and not to her as a Black woman, “As I look at privilege, because of microaggressions the females of color experiences every day, I think of privilege as belonging to other people in my world.”

Theme 2: The weight of oppression

Notably, every participant gave an audible sigh after being asked “As a Black woman, what does oppression mean to you?” Participants then went on to describe the weight of oppression felt by each of them went far beyond a limitation of opportunity. Michelle described

how the stifling weight of oppression keeps her from reaching her potential:

> The first thing that comes to my mind is just the limitations - I'm trying to say this without being graphic…what is coming to mind for me is George Floyd, and just the knee. That symbolizes what everybody thinks in my opinion right now. Just oppression in general, how we can't breathe. We're stifled. We are put in cages – roadblocks - just all the things that prevent us from being successful and even preventing us from reaching our full potential.

Referencing a headline describing a heatwave that morning, Beverly discussed how she reflected on the term, oppressive,

> The headline said, sweltering and oppressive, and it threw me off because I had never seen oppressive used in that context. Because again from a Black woman's lens, this is not a term that we should be easily throwing out there. But it is also something that I always resonated with being something very negative or very malicious or unjust - particularly in relation to racial disparities and discrimination, but a special emphasis on the Black community… I definitely consider oppression - particularly as a Black woman - to be a label that has been associated with this unique and cruel treatment that we receive, for no other primary identifiable reason, other than we have this intersection of being a woman and being Black.

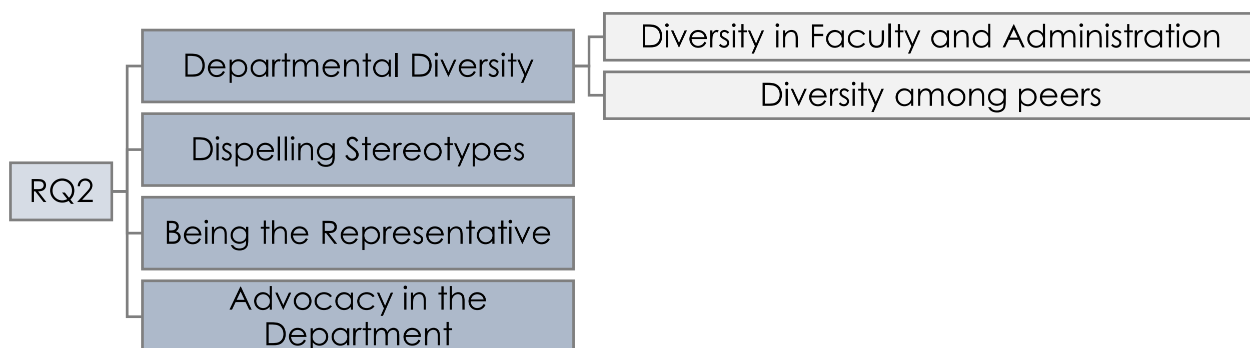
Research Question 2

Interview Questions 3 through 5 focused on the participants' experiences with their CES program. Specifically, participants discussed the overall climate of equity, belonging, and inclusion within the department, as well as their perception of their departments awareness of and willingness to address privilege and oppression. Upon analysis, I found three themes, which

were broken down into subthemes where appropriate. The four themes were departmental diversity, dispelling stereotypes, being the representative, and advocacy. These themes are discussed further in the following sections.

Figure 4

Thematic map for research question 2



Theme 1: Departmental diversity

When asked to describe the overall climate of the department, participants described how the diversity found within the department impacted the level of equity, belonging, and inclusion they felt as Black women within that space. Upon analysis, two subthemes were identified: diversity in faculty and administration and diversity among their colleagues.

Subtheme 2.1: Diversity in faculty and administration

When asked to describe the overall climate of the department, participants described how the diversity found withing the department's faculty and administrators impacted the level of equity, belonging, and inclusion they felt as Black women within that space. Michelle summed up how she felt as a Black woman in a predominately White department:

> The program that I attend is predominately White. I would say it is a sea of white, a sea of white males predominantly run by white males, the inclusion even from other

> disciplines there is not a whole lot of inclusion. Very separate and segregated. … I don't think [equality, belonging, inclusion] is even respected. I still think the views are predominantly of the white males in antiquated Eurocentric policies that we've embedded into higher ed.

Elaine's immediate response was "Zero. Not at all." She then adjusted her rating, explaining the impact of inequities that occur when applying policies within the department:

> Feeling almost … I would say 4.7 out of 10; almost a five. I think this is because at this level of dedication to a degree … you make sacrifices for the privileges that others have. You want to look at it from an objective standpoint, you want to be objective, but you still internalize it … [she then described an inequitable policy decision] … And again, little things like that. Pragmatics within the program. People of color have stated that whites have been given different directives of what they can do as far as changes in the program. But for people of color. Policy – yeah right. Yeah.

As one of the first Black women in a newer program before her, Beverly discussed how bringing in her experiences exposed the lack of inclusion in the department,

> I think when I came into the program, I was a force and a force that they weren't necessarily expecting, prepared or ready for. And I spoke up and was very outspoken to the program head. But what I found was that as I was bringing in my own experiences, and I was challenging the other students in my cohort as well as the professors, it highlighted the fact that there were a lot of areas where the circle hadn't been closed, like there's a lot of things left undone, times that you can't answer my questions … There was very much this layer of believing that they had or that they were covering their bases in terms of being inclusive.

Having also been a master's student in the department, Haniah discussed how expanding the overall diversity in the department, including hiring a chair who is a Black female, has markedly increased the sense of equality, belonging, and inclusion.

> Speaking from my experience in my department, it is [equality, belonging, inclusion] really good, and I know that everybody doesn't have this same experience. So, it is something that I'm extremely grateful for - having partnered with me. My experience has almost consistently been great… we know what we got; we know that we are talented as Black woman … So, for me equity shows up a lot in our program.

Haniah went on to discuss how her experiences within the institution were markedly different for her as a Black woman impacted by her experiences in the program in comparison to her experience outside the department,

> I feel like in the department, I feel inclusion. When I step outside the department - off the floor - I don't feel safe. If I could pick up the department and put it [somewhere else] I would feel like I belong more. So, it's not safe for me … to be in an extremely White space in a place, in a place where my oppressive identities are prevalent and in a constant fight…In the department, and there are other pockets of good people, and also those people taking big steps to fight the war on racism…But White people have created a fire so to speak, that doesn't make myself and other Black woman feel safe. So, the department does what it can for justice, which is what we need as Black women to affirm and redefine.

Subtheme 2.2: Diversity among peers

Participants also described how the diversity found among doctoral students in the department impacted the level of equity, belonging, and inclusion they felt as Black women.

Beverly discussed how she needed to educate her department of the importance of having Black women colleagues for support and a sense of inclusion

In terms of representation of Black women, that was very clearly lacking. Having women like me in those spaces may not be the norm. That's… something that I have to pushback and educate them on." Beverly went on to say, "There have been instances where I needed, I wanted validation or comfort, knowing that there was going to be someone else that looked like me – [who] could resonate with my struggle."

Elaine discussed how recruitment and retention was enhanced by increasing the diversity among departmental staff in her programs.

> I think there's been some activity in trying to recruit minority participants in the program. Even within the last couple of cohorts. I've seen more leave, the only Black woman in my program, and one of the two Black individuals [two of the three Black students] within another cohort; that I see that as a lack of progression of inclusion. I think recently, most recently, they've hired more diverse staff and for the first time I've seen multiple Black individuals within the program.

Michelle noted the importance of being able to engage with other peers who understand diversity. This allows her to debrief after each class, which served as a safe, healing support system,

> Within the cohort, there is diverse dialogue and debriefing after class that takes place when we all get together to discuss some of the privilege and oppression we experience - right after class…it is more of a collective healing process for us.

Haniah discussed the importance of representation and the excitement she feels from seeing other Black females thriving in the program,

I'm always going to be thinking about you and how you're thriving in the program, and in a certain way, that I may not automatically think about that with a White person. I think when it comes to being in places with other people who appear to be like or have similarities to me, I get excited because there is the ability to be 100% authentic.

Theme 2: Dispelling stereotypes.

Participants discussed the pressure they feel to constantly disconfirm stereotypes of Black women within the department. Aware of how Black women are perceived by the dominant culture, Beverly discussed always feeling the need to be guarded and vigilant.

I was always a defensive person…I always grew up knowing what my intersection was, what that meant as a Black woman, and what that meant for how the outside world looked at me…no matter how many degrees I had, no matter you know, how much work I put in. And so that was something that for me, I became very defensive … I am not going to give you any reason to have anything [negative] to say to me.

Similarly, Haniah discussed her awareness oppressed identities, how other Black woman have been treated, and how her behaviors will be judged by others and held to a different standard.

Growing up I definitely was aware of different identities that are oppressed. And how other people kind of see how I should show up in life…I also see how certain women are treated depending on how they portray [themselves] in certain spaces … and so that's something I think I recognized early on: how you present yourself will result in different outcomes.

Theme 3: Being the representative

The participants spoke of the expectation that they would represent the culture and lead the discourse on racism or multicultural competency in an environment that often felt unsafe.

Beverly challenged the assumption that as a Black woman, she was responsible to educate others on what it means to be Black

> I am female, Black, and just because I'm getting my doctorate degree in counseling doesn't mean that I want to take on the culture and explain this to people who are not Black … So, I'm now getting into the spaces of what I want to teach, of course and yes, I can do this [teach] as a graduate assistantship, but also, don't give me a multicultural course to teach because I'm not going to teach that class just because I'm the Black adjunct that you have.

Elaine challenged the insensitive expectation that she should start the conversations that needed to occur to increase equity, belonging, and inclusion, stating that it was the responsibility of faculty to be aware, to advocate, and to be able to have these conversations.

> Yes, it is insane. You're a leader [the professor] and they [the non-minority students] need to hear from faculty. But they say, ‘but you are a stakeholder, they need to hear from you.’ I’m thinking, I don't have the bandwidth to tackle all these things. I think that they are just insensitive to some of the intergenerational things that their students are already dealing with … They [the professors] are supposed to be able to have these conversations. They're supposed to be able to advocate - not use students to be the advocate or not use students to be the expert.

Finally, Michelle discussed how the climate found in the department does not allow her to feel safe enough to discuss her experiences as a Black woman with others because there is no evidence that they have established a safe relationship and therefore are not aware,

> If counselor educators were examples - if they would model ethical practice – that would be ideal. There needs to be an environment of safety. Establishing a relationship. And,

> you know, awareness. There needs to be evidence that this relationship is safe versus I'm going to talk about my feelings and deal with the consequences. I need some level of trust and understanding. But at least mutual respect, values, confidentiality, and ethics.

Theme 4: Advocacy in the Department

The participants spoke about their desire to change the climate of the department to be more equitable, welcoming, and inclusive. As a result, this caused them to carefully weigh if and how to advocate within their department. Beverly took on the role as an advocate to further the awareness that Black women are not a homogenous group, but to expand their understanding so they can begin to the uniqueness within diversity.

> At least within my cohort and seemingly for my school and my program, I was the advocate for Black individuals, Black women. I very much made it a point to be as authentic as I could all the way around … for me, it was very much realizing that the school had, and the program had some elements of diversity, some elements of representation, but there was still a lot lacking in terms of knowledge and understanding, for lack of better terms, highlighting individuality when it comes to cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and differences.

Other times, participants felt that advocating for themselves would not be safe nor productive. Haniah described a time where she was not able to address an issue directly; however, one member of the cohort, who would most likely be heard, advocated on behalf of those unable to advocate for themselves.

> I didn't necessarily feel as though it was a safe opportunity to speak up or that it was going to be productive. One of my cohort members then advocated for us all…she believed that he probably wasn't going to listen to anyone else. So, she was like, I can do

it, too to advocate for us. One of the professors took off one of the assignments on the syllabus.

Finally, Elaine spoke of her efforts to raise awareness by advocating for herself and her Black cohort by setting up a meeting with the department chair, however she felt that her concern was not seen as a departmental priority

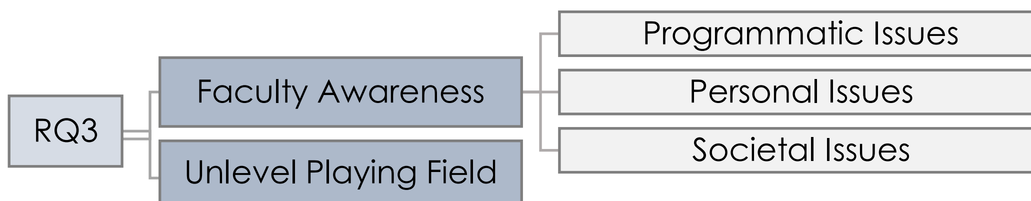
> When I hear something, I will do something. So, I set up a meeting to speak with my department chair, and I told him about my concern to advocate on behalf of myself and all my Black cohorts. So, when I had that meeting, the chair of the department was aware of their own [competing] agenda. And so, I just happened to be in at a time where it appeared to me that we were at the lower level [or priorities].

Research Question 3

Interview Questions 6 through 9 focused on the participants' perceptions of their interactions with faculty in their CES program. Specifically, participants discussed their perceptions of faculty's attitudes towards equity, belonging, and inclusion, as well as their experiences when working with faculty either fostered or did not foster a climate of equity, safety, and inclusion. Upon analysis, I found two themes, which were faculty awareness and unlevel playing field.

Figure 5

Thematic map for research question 3.



Theme 1: Faculty Awareness

When discussing their perceptions of their interactions with faculty, participants discussed how their faculty's attitudes towards them as Black women fostered or did not foster climate of equity, safety, and inclusion. Three subthemes were identified: Programmatic issues, personal issues, and societal issues.

Subtheme 3.1: Programmatic Issues

Participants discussed how their relationships with the faculty impacted their ability to address issues that would arise within the program. This created a climate in the department that ranged from dismissive disregard to collaborative solutions. Michelle described how faculty did not want to discuss or attend to issues relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion. She stated that

> They are dismissive or try to be ignorant to it. I will go back to applying for the program. My original reasoning for going into the program was to be like you and to open doors and create opportunities for Black woman, and I was told before I even interviewed for acceptance, not to talk about that. That was triggering.

Elaine described the availability and support received over her concerns when a professor who was not culturally sensitive was scheduled to teach a multicultural course.

> I can honestly say I felt that, with the exception of … things … important to the institutions, they were available to me and aware of issues. One time, … [described the professor] … When I expressed some of the concerns we were having as a cohort to the

chair, she stated that she was there to support me and so I do feel I've had a positive experience with individuals. That was positive as far as them being there for the students.

At the same time, Elaine discussed the role that implicit biases can play when faculty to under prioritize issues of equity and inclusion

And so yes, I know they're aware of it, but when it comes to a system of other issues that they're trying to address, I think, implicit biases come into play. They're not meaning to be obtuse that they're really not, but it just comes across as unconcerned people … that the needs of marginalized students are a minor priority and are not always addressed.

Beverly stated that while her faculty would encourage open discussion, a lack of response beyond an acknowledgement left her unsure of the faculty's attitude on the topic,

Overall, I think that their attitude is welcoming in the sense of wanting to know things. To understand if we introduce a topic, if we bring it up and say, this is something that's going on, or this is something that is what we're seeing in relation to our specific program, they are welcoming to say like, Okay, well, thank you for sharing that or, you know, this is maybe a way that we could tackle that, right. However, even though they're welcoming of the ideas, I don't know what their attitudes are because they are not very responsive.

Finally, Haniah discussed how program faculty's increased engagement with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion has fostered a more collaborative environment within the department

What I've seen when I'm with faculty, there seems to be more engagement with DEI related things now, but when I was in the master's program, not as many professors were talking about DEI … just making sure to hit a certain unit … and moved on, and others

> … immersed the conversation throughout everything they do. Now it's like, perhaps because we have a Black woman in charge, it's like, no we're all gonna go there as a collective. So, I think now it's more prevalent and I wouldn't be shocked if it is true that some people had some resistance in the beginning.

Subtheme 3.2: Personal issues

Participants discussed how unprecedented restrictions that came because of the pandemic impacted their ability to succeed in their doctoral program. Overwhelmed by the impact of the pandemic on her family, Haniah discussed how her professors seemed unwilling to listen and work with her.

> I didn't really feel like the professor was understanding what I needed. It was really hard because it was the first time that I can think of … of not being able to meet schoolwork deadlines. I physically cannot do this because you know, the world right now is a hot mess … I'm trapped in a house … loved ones getting sick, friends telling me someone close to them was dying. So, holding space for that, and counseling about five clients, [taking] four or five classes, and adjusting to being a student again was a lot. I wish - I wish those professors were able to not be rigid and to hear me out when I was expressing that, but I don't even think they have or had the capacity or cared to really change the way they approached being professors.

While Elaine felt there was a climate of diversity, inclusion, and belonging, the trauma from her experiences during the pandemic overwhelmed her ability to process what was going on in her life with the faculty.

> The overall impact is that I am always aware that a simple thing like registering for a class is going to become a task that feels arduous in nature. And at this point, I think … I

need to desensitize from the experience because it impacts [me]. Even though I feel like the areas of diversity, inclusion, and belonging are present, after fighting for 24 months in the middle of a pandemic, in the middle of the horrendous things that we've seen and were said in the media about women of color and people of color, watching my family members die or people dying from COVID, and the healthcare disparity, and still having to come in and put all of that behind me and sit before a computer and do the best I can. So, in all honesty, I feel I'm saying it now because I think my voice has to encompass all of [information] in the classroom … and we aren't able to process [these] encounters with professors without [bringing in] a long heavy days' worth of business junk that we're trying to filter

Within the context of being in a department where the faculty were dismissive to or ignorant of issues regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, Michelle discussed how not being able to process the stress of the pandemic or George Floyd's murder had on her health.

I had a serious illness while in the program … and those were not all from the program … the transition to COVID and George Floyd, all of that bottled up until my first semester was a nightmare. And I feel like that is another reason why I'm not really accepted in the program, because I had to bow out for my health, but I still stayed in the program. There was a lot of consideration for me to continue, to be an black female [in a White department]. They gave me an extension and I did what I needed to do to continue, but I just think about how damaging this is to our health, and I don't want to die based on somebody else's foolishness.

Subtheme 3.3: Societal issues

All the participants began their doctoral studies during the racial turmoil that came after

the death of George Floyd. Participants discussed how they were impacted by faculty attitudes towards how this would affect them within the program. Beverly discussed how the faculty were aware of the racial and social injustice, but they were not having in-depth conversations.

> I think that they are becoming more aware… I think that there was some knowledge that these things happen [social injustice]. It was like made evident by COVID; it was made evident by the George Floyd [murder] … we know [racial injustice] has been happening. But it has not been highlighted as much. And so, for the school, we need to be talking about these things that are going on. So then for me as this Black woman, I was like, Oh, well, I'm gonna challenge that thought. Because these things didn't just start happening. These are things that you are highlighting or you're acknowledging [have been going on for a long time], but there hasn't been in-depth conversation.

Finally, Michelle discussed how a professor's expressing his political views in class, was one example of why she viewed faculty and administration as "overtly oppressive",

> One of my professors [Biracial/Did not identify as Black] talked a lot about politics and talked unfavorably about affirmative action and Obama. [The professor] stated that racism isn't real and was against the whole Black Lives Matter movement … and these things were not to be talked about.

Theme 2: Unlevel Playing field

Some participants discussed feeling that as Black women, they were not afforded an equal playing field. As a result, that they felt a pressure to have to overperform to succeed in the program. Beverly discussed how she had to work harder and exert an extra effort to succeed.

> I was always positioned and taught that I [as a Black female] had to work harder, or I had to, you know, put in XY and Z efforts and I didn't have the space or the opportunity to

> joke around or to you know, not take every experience or opportunity that was made available to me seriously … There will be moments that I feel myself get overwhelmed or anxious and nervous. Because I know that I, for lack of better terms, like I gotta kill it! I have to, you know, just shut it down. And the knowing though, that the spotlight is on me…So, you know, there are times that I do have to reframe or remind myself of who I am, and you know, the things that I know to be true.

Elaine discussed the various advantages that she sees provided to non-minority students but are not extended to students of color

> I have to work twice as hard to figure out what other students are told out of our earshot. People of color [in my program] have stated that white students have been given different directives of what they can do, as far as changes in the program…students of color realize that other people [non-minorities] are given the privilege of being able to have more flexibility in their timelines and access to direction. It should have been the same across the board. [Describing dissertations]. I can't wrap my mind around it. How is it that people of color are saying they are having a hard time getting [Dissertation activities], and I'm hearing that other White students are [getting the same Dissertation activities] on a weekly basis … That is not inclusive and doesn't make me feel like I really belong.

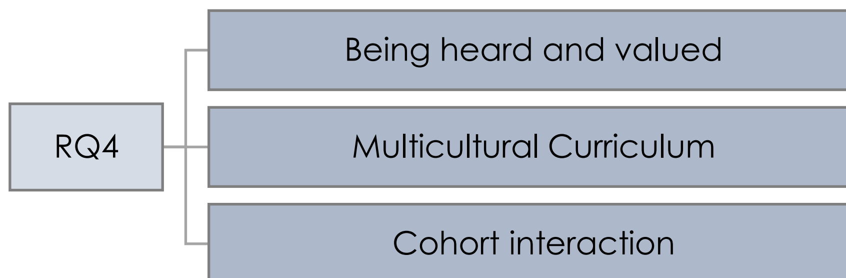
Research Question 4

Interview Questions 10 through 13 focused on the participants' perceptions of their interactions within the learning environment in their CES program. Specifically, participants discussed their perceptions of the overall climate of equity, belonging, and inclusion within classroom settings and other learning environments, as well as their ability to discuss with faculty and students when they did not feel respected, did not belong, or was not included in the

class. Upon analysis, I found three themes, which were being heard and valued, multicultural curriculum, and cohort interaction.

Figure 6

Thematic map for research question 4.



Theme 1: Being heard and valued

The participants spoke of feeling valued when they were heard within the learning environment. They all noted that having at least one person who truly listened to them was instrumental in retaining them as a student. In describing the learning environment, Elaine discussed how she felt welcome, heard, and understood by faculty when she advocated for other individuals within her program who did not feel welcome or safe,

> I felt comfortable [to talk] with my advisor, selected colleagues, and cohorts. I can recall some who felt uncomfortable about their experience of being LGBTQ [in a non-affirming institution]. I was an ally to them, but my advocacy wasn't always reciprocated by other students or faculty. The faculty that I did communicate with seemed genuine and sincere. My professor scheduled time to meet with me about my concern and asked, 'what is it that you need from me for me to support you?' Even the chair of the department listened to my concerns and welcomed all students to advocate. So, I did feel supported.

Beverly recalled having one professor who encouraged her and her cohort to voice their

concerns about different issues during class time,

> We did have one professor that allowed us to be vocal during class time on whatever issues that we had. The cohorts felt that he was really the only professor that gave us that platform or that space to be heard. He would listen to our concerns, and then use his position of power, to go back to the department and say, 'This is what our students are saying, we need to make some type of change.' So, he was very instrumental in us having a platform to be heard. Yeah, it was it was very minimal, I only really felt good with one professor…

When asked if her concerns were properly addressed by the department, Beverly felt that the department did not hear or care about students' concerns,

> There were efforts that were introduced [to the department], but I don't think that I could say any issues were properly addressed because there was very little follow up or follow through [by the department] …it seems like a lot of things that students brought up, got pushed to the backburner.

Even though Haniah felt very welcome, heard, and understood by faculty and the department, as soon as she left the department, she felt unsafe and threatened by the climate at the institution.

> I feel like in the department, I feel inclusion. When I step outside the department - off the floor - I don't feel safe … to be in an extremely White space in a place … where my oppressive identities are prevalent and in a constant fight… There have been times I said that if I'm not feeling seen and heard and feel unsafe [at the institution], I am going to leave school, but the department they didn't make me feel that way. So, I didn't leave school.

Theme 2: Multicultural Curriculum

Participants discussed the difference between studying in a multicultural course as opposed to being immersed in diversity. Two of the participants talked about the inadequacy of relying on the existing single course multicultural curricula model to develop a climate of equality, belonging, and inclusion. Beverly described how the school felt that they were addressing issues of diversity and inclusion though coursework.

> And so, I think that for me, it was very much realizing that the school - the program had some elements of diversity, some elements of representation. But they were still lacking a lot of knowledge, a lot of understanding of individuality when it comes to cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, and differences. So, I was introducing the fact that this can't just be a one-week lesson - just be something that we're bringing up - because these are also our future counselors or our future mental health educators. How are we going to make a shift?

Wanting to improve the awareness of diversity and inclusion in the department, Beverly decided to use all her class discussions and papers to interject and strengthen multicultural awareness in her program.

> And so, for me, it was very much from the start of my program for every paper, every topic of discussion, we're going to talk about Black women in some way shape or form…even after the semesters were ending, having other peers or colleagues and professors reach out and say, you know, I've never even heard these terms [of colorism-discrimination] … And so now we're talking about these things and bringing up these topics in classes with students and you're calling out the one black student that you have in your class. And how that is, is crazy, or how that could very much be making them

> feel. I realized that even though there was some understanding, now we're getting more understanding because there's more conversation, as [uncomfortable conversation] is the missing piece.

Haniah felt the focus of the multicultural courses tended to center on whiteness when a White student is present. As a result, she felt that it was less relevant to the experiences of persons of color and hampered their ability to develop multicultural competence as well.

> There are things I might reflect on [in a multicultural class] that I might not reflect on outside of class because we don't talk like that all the time. There are not as many 'aha moments' or not as much personalized [relevant] conversation on what people of color need to do to help themselves. Privilege is centered in whiteness, and it always comes back to Whiteness. Even when there is just one White person in the room, it still takes up so much space, even if they're not talking much - because they're aware [of privilege], we still have to relate it back to Whiteness. And I just think it's important that people of color have a separate class to do some internal work, that will help us become even be more competent as counselors, and not say only White people need to work on being competent. I don't know if people of color are getting enough time and space to do their own internal work.

Michelle stated that the multicultural coursework in her program did not adequately address diversity, belonging, and inclusion. While her program is working to improve it, it is still not sufficient. She simply stated, "They tried to go through multicultural counseling coursework, but it's to the minimum, in my opinion, it is not even overtly addressed."

Theme 3: Cohort interaction

Overall, the participants seemed very comfortable with their peers, describing many of

their peers as supportive, curious, and accepting. As such, they felt that their relationships within the learning environment fostered a climate of equity, belonging, and inclusion. Haniah discussed how having a strong cohort had facilitated their growth in self-awareness,

> The relationship I have with my cohort is amazing. Except one person, they are all people of color, and that person, is constantly aware of themselves and working on growing [in self-awareness], and we're all working on growing.

Beverly felt that the meaningful relationships with her cohort created a community that built on mutual respect and consideration. This resulted in personal growth and awareness.

> I think that the learning environment was definitely inclusive in the sense that my cohort really worked well together. We really respected each other, and we were able to build our own relationship as a cohort outside of professors. … As a cohort we were always very invested in each other. The cohort as a whole was able to make the learning environment itself a very respectful and considerate place…My cohort and I are really the ones that helped to foster such an amazing environment. My educational experience this time around was as good as it was because of my cohort. And they are the reasons why, I still stuck through the program.

Michelle described the importance of having a cohort to process the privilege and oppression they experienced in during their classes.

> Within the cohort, there is diverse dialogue and debriefing after class that takes place when we all get together to discuss some of the privileges and oppression we experience right after class. Okay. We are able to have those conversations on our own. But there was no mention of even us working together until we all decided to get together. So, we just started an African-American mentorship program for the cohort … it's more of a

collective healing process for us.

When asked about her interactions with her White peers, Michelle felt that they while they did not always understand the changes needed in the department. But she recognized that they were willing to be empathic and accepting.

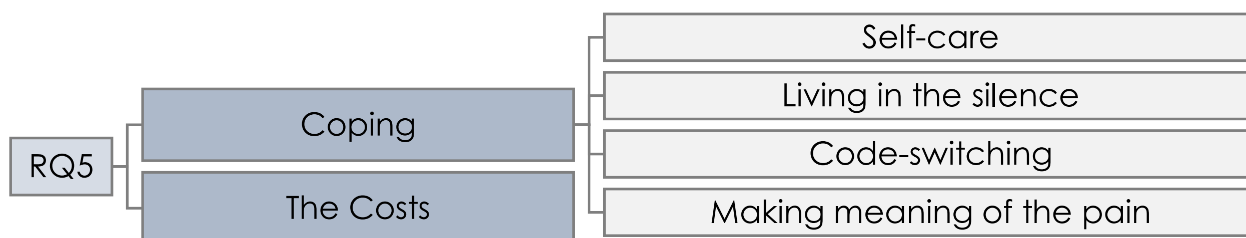
> I would say it's not bad. It's pretty good. I think there's a lot of understanding that needs to happen - there's work to be done. Not 100%. But I think the fact that we are counselors, I think there's a lot of willingness to have empathy and acceptance anyway.

Research Question 5

Questions 14 and 15 focused on the impact that their experiences in their CES programs had on them as Black women. Specifically, participants discussed their ability to show their authentic self in the program, as well as the strategies they used to cope when dealing with a climate that does not foster equity, belonging, and inclusion. Upon analysis, I found two themes, which were broken down into subthemes where appropriate. The two themes were coping and the costs.

Figure 7

Thematic map for research question 5.



Theme 1: Coping

The participants used coping strategies to persevering through the CES program. The five

subthemes related to coping were self-care, intentional speaking, adapting, code-switching, hope: there is a better way.

Subtheme 5.1: Self-care

Each participant emphasized the importance of mental health counseling during their journey through the CES program. Most sought counseling outside of the academic setting and expressed difficulties in finding a culturally competent counselor. Elaine stated,

> I didn't realize how much mental acuity it took on a daily basis to do my best to turn in these assignments - Do my best while in the same breath, just keep a low profile. You have to do it because again when I was doing this for everyone…So I lost my thunder and began to pray more. So, it made me deal with difficult emotions, so many different emotions. And the fact that I went back [to graduate school]. I chose to do therapy as part of my self-care – my wellness.

Elaine talked about difficulties that she had in attaining culturally competent counselor. She stated, “Even in the profession as a clinician, it's even more difficult to find my own clinician that has the awareness that racism seems stronger and the tactics are more scary.”

Subtheme 5.2: Living in the silence

The participants in this study expressed comfort and satisfaction in “speaking up” and a deep appreciation of being heard and understood. Beverly had several strategies that she employed to receive and process information while intentionally strengthening her voice. She stated,

> I think for me, very much being confident in using my voice is another strategy that I use…Another one of my strategies is giving myself grace and patience - to allow myself to process and receive information. I have to take my time and ask myself those questions

> …before I react. I found that having a voice, and one that can be powerful, I have to be very intentional in the way that I move and in the way that I speak.

Beverly went on to say another coping strategy is listening more. There was a time to speak and a time to be silent.

> Another strategy is listening more…. And it was very much a wanting to defend myself and highlight that, you know, I'm not a stereotype… I want them to hear me, and I don't want to have to minimize myself. But maybe I need to take a step back sometimes so that I can figure out exactly how I want to articulate this. When I'm clear, concise, and not emotion based, you can hear the facts over my feelings.

Conversely, after attempts to be heard and supported, Elaine chose to retreat as a protective strategy. When asked, "Do you have strategies to protect yourself when dealing with people of privileged statuses," her response was,

> Yes. I say less. One of my professors actually encouraged me and another student of color to try to say more. But I'm not going to take up that burden at this point. I just want to get my degree. I want to do my dissertation, and not worry about saying more…I think that they are just insensitive to some of the intergenerational things that their students are already dealing with. I just don't have the bandwidth to tackle all these things.

Elaine was glad to find an opportunity to speak as a Black woman and to debrief. It was a relief to her to be validated. She stated,

> So, the uniqueness is in the analogy that I already used -- gumbo. Everybody's gumbo tastes a little bit different. So, for me - my experience, the support that I got, but also the rejection that I felt the sense of not being included -in the sense of not really belonging. My intersectionality was unique to me, and I'm just grateful because this was cathartic for

me to get it out - to say, I was not imagining these things. The question that you asked me helped me to debrief what I just didn't know needed to be discussed.

Subtheme 5.3: Code-Switching

Beverly spoke of being accustomed to shedding some of her racial identity to navigate in White spaces. Beverly says, “Sometimes, it doesn't make me feel any type of way. I say that because this is how I was raised. This is how I was conditioned - I was brought up.” This was common among the participants. Beverly goes on to explain how the quest not to be “othered” in White spaces affects her work ethic and burden to not be stereotyped,

> I've always been this go-getter. I handle my business. I'm very independent. I show up. I'm about my work. I'm gonna check all the boxes. You're not gonna have anything [derogatory] to say about me. And I am not going to give you any reason to have anything to say to me.

Beverly then shifts to the realization of the cost,

> But as I have come to realize now, it is getting to a point that it is taxing and draining, always having to do that…. I'm over having to be the leader because now I have to be on top of everything and everybody, and that is draining for me. I know that I have worked to be here, and I deserve to be here, but I don't want to have to explain why I deserve to be here. I just want to occupy this space.

When asked what keeps her from being authentically herself, Michelle stated

> I would say when I kind of protect myself. I do realize that even though we're in this environment, even though there are spaces for us to be authentic, sometimes it's more harmful than good. I do recognize when it is appropriate for me to be completely authentic and voice my concerns versus when I need to be silent. What I tried to do is go

to literature or try to bring up literature but things in perspective.

Conversely, Michelle was negatively impacted by the feeling of being restricted in how she celebrates her identity. She said,

> It takes a little bit of my power away as an individual and as a Black woman. I love to celebrate being Black. I love to celebrate Black women, and to even have to consider how the celebrating and interacting affects others makes me angry.

Elaine commented on how being in the program has changed her,

> So, what has this program taught me? How I am changing. I think it's changed me for the better. As my grandmother used to say, once you are educated, they can never take that from you. I will forever be grateful for the opportunities, the things that were pleasant and the things that weren't. And so therefore, it's changing me in ways that I am probably not going to know until I come out on the other side.

The participants elaborated on code-switching as a strategy which Black women use to navigate interracial and academic interactions within the CES program.

Elaine recalls how automatic code-switching is for women of color,

> Being a woman of color in America and at an institution in America, I know how to code switch because I do it every day. All day long. It depends on the situation and the circumstances. It just turns on, it's like going through a green light. Unfortunately, with the caution of a yellow light and not knowing how to stop. I know how to transition as a woman of color. I do them interchangeably.

Subtheme: 5.4 Making meaning of the pain.

Although there was a palpable sentiment of anger, frustration, and exhaustion, all the participants voiced a desire to mentor those coming behind them. Haniah stated, “how can we

reimagine something different and work towards it? Because this can't be life.” She went on to say,

> The professor - the counselor educator, should set the tone of their approach to teaching and counseling. And you know, being a leader in the field, they should be actively listening to us. I say actively, meaning not only making the time but making some adjustment or behavior change afterwards.

Beverly talked about the need for movement to more advocacy, curriculum enhancements, and a deeper exploration of diversity in the program.

> What you're doing is so important; it's needed because there is so much more that needs to be done and needs to change within our field. And if nobody is speaking up, no one is advocating for these changes. So, I think that we need to review or reestablish the way our programs are branded and the focus of the curriculum - not even just from a race standpoint, but the fact that there needs to be more of an emphasis on an extended learning of different cultures, different backgrounds, different ethnicities, and not just the surface level. But the things that really are specific and unique to different populations.

Haniah discussed the need for tailored coursework,

> I think it would be cool to see us have like two different multicultural core sections, one for white people, and then having a class for people of color, and having similar conversations and getting the same content, but with people of color understanding like how whiteness has harmed us in a way and caused us to consciously or unconsciously, to do the same to each other because again, like I said, when we think about privilege in the program is just about whiteness.

Michelle talks about her desire for things to be better for those who come after her. She says,

I do want to advocate for more Black women in these programs to keep going and to advocate for our opinions to be heard and our racial trauma not to be ignored. So, something that I'm very passionate about is racial trauma in general. I want to make sure it is at the forefront, and that people are educated about it.

Theme 2: The costs

When asked, "What has it cost you to be in the CES program?" Beverly reflected, "Wow, I really liked that question. What is it costing me? So, as a general statement, I will say everything." Haniah said,

No one has asked me that before! A lot - it is taxing…As someone who was first doing it in my family… There is a lot of labor being the first…I was the first daughter, the first child, and well you know, all those things. I'm having to do this and then having to share that it's not easy. People were not really grasping how hard and couldn't compare it to anything. So, there's a lot of cost. It is draining, and sometimes I feel guilty.

Michelle stated that it has cost her mental and physical wellness,

I internalized some of that anger and frustration. We do know that it can cause migraines and things like that. I do have battle scars… My experiences have been very triggering, very harmful, very harming to me as a Black female.

It took a significant toll on Michelle's physical health. Michelle stated,

I had a serious illness while in the program - health issues have to climb back man. And those were not all from the program…the transition to COVID [lockdowns] and George Floyd, all of that bottled up until my first semester was a nightmare. And I feel like that is another reason why I'm not really accepted in the program, because I had to bow out for my health, but I still stayed in the program. There was a lot of consideration for me to

continue, to be an black female [in a White department]. They gave me an extension and I did what I needed to do to continue, but I just think about how damaging this is to our health, and I don't want to die based on somebody else's foolishness.

Beverly also stated that it has cost her mental fitness, time, and motivation to continue,

> I'll say my mental health because of course, you know, in the program itself, it's time consuming. But the burnout that I started to feel was huge. It began to feel like a chore almost knowing that I had to show up. And even if I had my own thing going on, I had to somewhat have it together because I know I am this representation. I know that I'm not a quitter, so I gotta get through this. I know that there's a lot riding on this, because I am very much a social influencer in terms of the fact that I know there are people watching and I've had so many young women, young girls saying 'I'm looking up to you' or 'I've never known anybody to be this educated'…it is way bigger than me. I understand that there's a lot riding on it because of that, and I can't fail. I have no room to not show up, not be present, not get this done. And I think it has been very exhausting - very taxing.

Michelle reflects on what she has lost because of being in her CES program,

> A professor created a divisive and very harmful environment and for me. He created fear – we were very fearful of even speaking against some of the things that have happened. We were told to keep our head down and not to make waves. So very traumatizing. very traumatizing. I have definitely lost respect for the counselor educators in the program. It would be nice if counselor educators were examples - you know? When you're learning to become a counselor, if they would model ethical practice – that would be ideal. I think that is the goal! There needs to be evidence that this relationship is safe versus I'm going to talk about my feelings and deal with the consequences. I need some level of trust and

understanding. But at least mutual respect, values, confidentiality, and ethics.

Summary

This chapter detailed the qualitative thematic analysis that was used to answer the research questions. The results of the thematic analysis included twelve themes, and ten subthemes. These themes and subthemes work together to describe the shared intersectional experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in CES programs and to ensure the inclusion of the Black female's unique voice in the construction of strategies to facilitate the development of awareness and cultural sensitivity in CES programs.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to examine how Black women experience privilege and oppression in CES programs. In this chapter, I discuss the findings obtained from a thematic analysis of participants' interview data. Then, I discuss the findings as they relate to current literature. Last, I present implications pertaining to counselor educators, the limitations of the study, and the recommendations for future research.

Discussion

There has been a lack of research on Black female doctoral students' experience of privilege and oppression in CES programs. Given the importance of diversity in counselor education programs, this study was conducted to increase the existing knowledge base. Several of the themes found within this study were consistent with prior research on the intersection of race and gender for Black women in addition to providing new information on Black women's experiences with privilege and oppression in CES programs. The following sections of the study will relate the themes that were identified from the analysis of the participants' experiences to previous literature and discuss any new findings.

Research Question 1

Participants discussed that their experiences with privilege and oppression are fluid because of the internal ambiguity of these interactions and the interplay of external social phenomena. Their perspectives were organized under two themes: complexity of privilege and the weight of oppression.

Theme 1: Complexity of Privilege

As participants discussed their perceptions of privilege, many discussed how their views of privilege was contextual. They noted that although they viewed their education as an area of

privilege, it was overshadowed by the overall lack of privilege afforded them as Black women.

Subtheme 1.1: Well-Educated Black Woman

The participants discussed how they do possess privilege in some areas of their lives, mainly due to their education status. They viewed their doctoral decree as an opportunity to gain access to an area of privilege otherwise closed to them. Though they were not always aware of their educational privilege until they were in graduate school, participants discussed how their educational privilege will be used to help others without privilege.

Subtheme 1.2: The Reality of Being a Black Woman

Participants viewed themselves as privileged in some areas, but they also noted that as Black women, they viewed privilege as belonging to others and not to them. This often overshadowed any benefit achieved by their educational privilege. They also discussed how the awareness of the systemic barriers they faced as Black women was formed early, such as the extra sacrifices required of Black women for them to gain the same level of access given to non-minority communities.

The identified theme of the complex nature of privilege is consistent with the literature that found the privilege-oppression dynamic is a coexistence of two phenomena that are in conflict (Gunnarsson, 2017). Research also suggests that Black women's identities are fluid and intersect in various ways, leading to both privileged and oppressed statuses in differing social contexts, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged (Chan et al., 2018; Minarik, 2017; Warner, 2018). Finally, the results support research findings that when an oppressed person rises to a position of power, they are very aware of their experiences of systemic wrongs while not fully realizing their potential to occupy a privileged status (Shannon, 2020).

Theme 2: The Weight of Oppression

When asked about oppression, every participant gave an audible sigh before answering. They went on to describe how the weight of oppression felt but each of them went far beyond a limitation of opportunity. They described the stifling weight of oppression, noting that it felt like a knee to the neck, holding them down, for no other primary identifiable reason, other than being a Black woman. Their experiences were consistent with the literature finding the impact of microaggressions and macroaggressions on their ability to complete the CES program by failing to provide equal opportunities to Black students (Rolle, 2021). The results also supported research showing the harmful psychological effects of implicit forms of oppression, which do not provide a clearly identifiable source, resulting in the oppressed person questioning or unable to prove the reality of oppression (Houshmand et al., 2017; Sue, 2010).

Research Question 2

Participants discussed the overall climate of equity, belonging, and inclusion within their department, as well as their perception of their department's awareness of and willingness to address privilege and oppression. Four themes were identified: departmental diversity, dispelling stereotypes, being the representative, and advocacy.

Theme 1: Departmental Diversity

When asked to describe the overall climate of the department, participants described how the overall diversity found within the department significantly impacted the level of equity, belonging, and inclusion they felt as Black women. Two subthemes were identified: diversity in faculty and administration and diversity among colleagues.

Subtheme 1.1: Diversity in Faculty and Administration

The four participants described very different levels of belonging and inclusion in their

department, which they directly attributed to the level of diversity among program faculty and administration. This directly impacted the level of safety they felt in addressing these issues. Furthermore, even in programs that had greater diversity, participants still felt the effects of implicit biases embedded in the culture. Finally, though one participant was in a highly diverse department, once she left the department, as a Black woman she felt so threatened by the culture of the institution that she considered leaving the program. Thus, the department served as a protective factor. This lack of diversity was consistent with research findings the Black female faculty members are persistently underrepresented in tenured positions as well as positions of leadership, such as dean or university president (Laursen & Austin, 2020).

Subtheme 1.2: Diversity Among Peers

Participants also described how the diversity found among doctoral students, particularly other Black women, in the department impacted the level of equity, belonging, and inclusion they felt as Black women. The level of diversity among their colleagues impacted the support they received as well as their sense of inclusion. In addition, participants discussed the importance of having allies among their peers, which helped them feel safe and welcome. This is consistent with the research of the importance of peer support to help Black females to help them to persist through their challenging experiences (Shavers & Moore, 2019).

The study's finding within the theme, departmental diversity, support the impact of the absence of active recruitment and retention of racially diverse faculty and students, which results in reduced levels of interconnectedness, well-being, and shared experiences. This unintentionally perpetuates the status quo and signals a lack of appreciation for the positive contributions that racial, gender, and ethnic diversity can bring to the educational experience and learning outcomes, as well as graduation potential (Boatwright et al., 2018; Laurin et al., 2013;

Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2017).

Theme 2: Dispelling Stereotypes

Participants discussed the pressure they feel to constantly disconfirm stereotypes of Black women within the department. Aware of how Black women are perceived by the dominant culture, participants felt the need to be guarded and vigilant, knowing that they would be judged by others and held to a different standard. The pressure of disconfirming negative stereotypes about Black females created stressors that impacted their performance in their program, which has been supported by previous research (Bell et al., 2021; Gaither et al., 2016; Steel, 1997). The pressure to disconfirm stereotypes has been shown to create anxiety and impair performance as individuals are required to overperform.

Theme 3: Being the Representative

The participants spoke of the expectation that they would represent the culture, lead the discourse on racism or multicultural competency, and educate others on what it means to be Black. Yet at the same time, the lack of established safe relationships within the department did not allow them to feel safe enough to discuss their experiences as a Black woman with others in the program. Finally, they pushed back against these expectations, stating that it was the responsibility of faculty, and not them, to be aware of, to advocate for, and to hold uncomfortable conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), privilege, and oppression. Black female students often feel ignored, marginalized, patronized, silenced, invisible, and isolated during classroom discussions, only being acknowledged if needed to provide a minority perspective leads to a feeling of being exploited, that their person, work, and effort were only valued as tools for recruitment and retention, as well as an engine for meeting diversity requirements (Allen, 2000; Ratts et al., 2015).

Theme 4: Advocacy in the Department

The participants spoke about their desire to change the climate of the department to be more equitable, welcoming, and inclusive. As a result, they carefully weighed if and how to advocate within their department. However, there were times when participants sought to increase awareness that Black women are not a homogenous group but rather expand their understanding to see the uniqueness within diversity. Other times, participants felt that advocating for themselves would not be safe nor productive. These results support research demonstrating the need for Black women to have safe spaces to express their thoughts and feeling in order to help them with gendered racism (Spate et al., 2020). Within these safe spaces, Black women can be their authentic selves and participate in protected discourse (Collins 2000; Spate et al., 2020).

Research Question 3

Participants discussed their perceptions of faculty's attitudes toward equity, belonging, and inclusion, as well as their experiences when working with faculty either fostered or did not foster a climate of equity, safety, and inclusion. Two themes were identified: faculty awareness and unlevel playing field.

Theme 1: Faculty Awareness

When discussing their perceptions of their interactions with faculty, participants discussed how their faculty's attitudes toward them as Black women fostered or did not foster climate of equity, safety, and inclusion. Three subthemes were identified: programmatic issues, personal issues, and societal issues.

Subtheme 1.1: Programmatic Issues

Participants discussed how their relationships with the faculty impacted their ability to

address issues and concerns when they arose within the program. The description of faculty interactions ranged from dismissive disregard to collaborative solutions. For one participant, this was evident prior to the admissions interview, when she was warned not to bring up DEI issues. Another participant described how the lack of response left her feeling that faculty were not concerned about her. Finally, even though issues were at times addressed collaboratively, she wondered if implicit biases rather than overt insensitivity impacted the way that some faculty dealt with DEI issues, noting that the needs of marginalized students seemed to be a minor priority and were not always addressed. These findings support the research suggesting that counselor educators who lack awareness of privilege and oppression or fail to integrate the concepts into their work are limited in their ability to address institutional and other systemic barriers that become a hinderance to the students (Ratts et al., 2016). The results provide a reminder that counselor educators must continually re-define their own critical self-awareness, cultural awareness, and social identities in order to competently engage diverse student groups and facilitate dialogues on racial matters (Boatright-Horowitz & Soeung, 2009; Chan et al., 2018).

Subtheme 1.2: Personal Issues

In addition to dealing with issues within their program, participants discussed how unprecedented restrictions from the pandemic impacted their ability to succeed in their doctoral program. Referring to it as being traumatic, participants described dealing with illness and death among their family and friends, hearing racist commentaries in the media about women of color, and fighting the effects of the health care disparity. In turn, the overwhelming stressors impacted their mental and physical health, reducing their ability to fully engage and function in the program. When reaching out to faculty, participants felt that faculty were at times rigid and not

willing to work with them. These results are consistent the findings of prior studies suggesting that professors often overlooked the impact of sustained racism, discrimination, and other unique stressors on Black women, as well as being unaware of how their behaviors and attitudes adversely impacted these students (Krieger, 2000; Paradies, 2006; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). This also supports the importance that counselor educators must both actively strive to be self-aware of their own privilege, oppression, position, and power, as well as cultivate an understanding of how they are positioned with their students within cross-cultural contexts (Ratts et al., 2015).

Subtheme 1.3: Societal Issues

All the participants began their doctoral studies during the racial turmoil that came after the death of George Floyd. His death brought issues of social injustices to the forefront, which impacted them within the program. The participants discussed how they were impacted by faculty attitudes toward addressing or not addressing these social justice issues within the program. Though participants noted that some faculty were aware of the racial and social injustice, they were not willing to have any form of in-depth conversations around how this impacted the students. Another participant discussed how a professor would express their political views, such as denying the reality of racism, in class, creating what she viewed as an overtly oppressive environment. This is consistent with the literature that observed an increase in student awareness concerning the lack of DEI within the counselor education and supervision program, particularly after the lack of response or acknowledgement that was observed after the murder of George Floyd. This inaction toward addressing a significant experience of social injustice impedes the mission of DEI, perpetuates the status quo, and reinforces it through language (David & Derthick, 2017; Liu et al., 2021; Meikle & Morris, 2022; Ng & Lam, 2020).

Theme 2: Unlevel Playing Field

Some participants discussed feeling that as Black women, they were not afforded an equal playing field. As a result, they felt pressure to overperform, work harder, and exert extra effort to succeed in the program. They also discussed the various advantages provided to non-minority students that did not seem extended to students of color. The unleveled playing field described by the participants confirms the challenge presented by Sue et al. (2019). They remind counselor educators that it is their responsibility to lay a solid foundation for social justice advocacy work by being aware of and changing the biases that are embedded in the CES curriculum, attitudes, polices, behavior, and practices to avoid further harm to marginalized students.

Research Question 4

Participants discussed their perceptions of the overall climate of equity, belonging, and inclusion within classroom settings and other learning environments, as well as their ability to discuss with faculty and students when they did not feel respected, did not belong, or were not included in the class. There were three themes: being heard and valued, multicultural curriculum, and cohort interaction.

Theme 1: Being Heard and Valued

The participants spoke of feeling valued when they were heard within the learning environment. They all noted that having at least one person who truly listened to them was instrumental in retaining them as a student. In describing the learning environment, they discussed times where they felt welcome, heard, and understood by faculty. One participant described how one of her professors encouraged her and her cohort to voice their concerns about different issues during class time. At the same time, when faculty took their concerns to the

department, they often felt that the department did not hear or care about students' concerns.

The findings highlight the fact that there are still not enough culturally competent, willing faculty to serve as role models, mentors, and advocates to address the barriers to academic and professional success of these students (Collins, 2000; Jones et al., 2015; Louis et al., 2016; Rolle, 2021). This includes faculty who are allies to Black females and other minoritized students, ones who will use their voice, power, and privilege to engage in intentional and purposeful efforts to speak out against injustice and advocate for change within the CES program. Finally, it is essential that counselor educators model the moral value, justice, and equality, as well as educate others about the importance of advocacy for marginalized individuals (Lester et al., 2021), taking on the sense of responsibility and urgency that is needed within the program to preserve and enhance well-being of Black females (Chan et al., 2018).

Theme 2: Multicultural Curriculum

Participants discussed the difference between studying in a multicultural course as opposed to being immersed in diversity. Two of the participants talked about the inadequacy of relying on the existing single course multicultural curricula model to develop a climate of equality, belonging, and inclusion. At the same time, they noted that the school did not seem aware that they were not actually addressing issues of diversity and inclusion by relying of the coursework. While one participant decided to use all her class discussions and papers to interject and strengthen multicultural awareness in her program, others felt the focus of the multicultural courses were not relevant to the experiences of persons of color and hampered their ability to develop multicultural competence as well.

The findings support the importance of counselor educators effectively integrating multiculturalism into teaching, class interactions, and supervision As such, it is the counselor

educators' responsibility to not only address multicultural knowledge and skills but also to provide a multidimensional conceptualization for their students so they are able to conceptualize cultural identity through an intersectional lens as well as provide opportunities for reflection on cultural and social identities (Chan et al., 2018). Therefore, it is essential to view multicultural social justice competence as not a class, but an attitude, a way of being, and it begins with each individual faculty member moving beyond the status quo, which counselor education departments must be prepared to facilitate (Ratts et al., 2016).

Theme 3: Cohort Interaction

Overall, the participants seemed comfortable with their peers, describing many of their peers as supportive, curious, and accepting. As such, they felt that their relationships within the learning environment fostered a climate of equity, belonging, and inclusion. The ensuing relationships they built with other persons of color and allies created a community that was built on mutual respect and consideration. This resulted in personal growth and awareness as well as a safe place to process the privilege and oppression they experienced during their classes. The results support the importance of the cohort model, whether formal or informal, in fostering an authentic environment for learning, collaboration, and advocating among the peers. Furthermore, research suggests that the positive impact was enhanced by the diversity among the cohort (Hill et al., 2021; Spellman et al., 2021) by providing an essential balance of challenge and support as well as moving their knowledge of multicultural and social justice beyond the classroom (Bagaka, 2015; Hill et al., 2021; Le Roux & Nagel, 2018; Paisley et al., 2010; Spellman et al., 2021).

Research Question 5

Participants discussed their ability to show their authentic self in the program as well as

the strategies they used to cope when dealing with a climate that does not foster equity, belonging, and inclusion. There were two themes, which were broken down into subthemes where appropriate. The two themes were coping and the costs.

Theme 1: Coping

The participants described the coping strategies they used to help them to persist through their CES program. The four subthemes related to coping were self-care, living with the silence, code-switching, and making meaning of the pain.

Subtheme 1.1: Self-Care

Each participant emphasized the importance of engaging in self-care as they progressed through the CES program. Most sought counseling outside of the academic setting to process and deal with the stressors of being in what was often an unsafe climate. In addition, they reiterated the importance of having a support system with their peers to provide a space for debriefing and processing their experiences with privilege and oppression. These results are consistent with the research that stresses the importance of self-care as a strategy to cope with the stressors of racism, discrimination, and navigating systems of oppression to preserve mental health and wellbeing (Wyatt, 2021). In addition, the results of the study support the importance of safe community conversations as a form of self-care by helping to counteract the damage caused by race-based trauma, stress, and oppressive systems that impact their health and wellness (French et al., 2020).

Subtheme 1.2: Living with the Silence

The participants in this study described carrying heavy a burden as they described having to always consider if they should share, how much to share, and was it safe to share. Because it is often not safe, they have learned to live with the fact that they had to always be on guard and

intentional instead of being able to freely share their truth, to be able to "speak up" and to be heard and understood. Participants described a variety of strategies they used to navigate unsafe environments. The results are consistent with research that found that Black women were socialized into a silencing their voice, requiring them to be guarded and resourceful in finding strategic ways and times to voice themselves (Young, 2014).

Subtheme 1.3: Code-Switching

The participants described how they used code-switching as a strategy that Black women use to safely navigate interracial and academic interactions. As a result, it has become an automatic response when they are in any type of White space, including their CES program. The participants often (but not always) felt pressure to adapt their speech practices among White peers and professors in order to be viewed as being professional. On the other hand, when speaking with Black peers, they would switch back to their natural voice or way of speaking.

This is consistent with the literature describing how Black females often hide cultural aspects of themselves to blend in with those of the dominant culture, including subtle, temporary changes of voice and behavior when expressing themselves (e.g., code-switching) in the presence of majority group members (Baker-Bell, 2020; McCluney et al., 2021). In addition, code-switching encompasses an impression management strategy that includes adjusting aspects of one's appearance, behavior, and expressions in different contexts (McCluney et al., 2018) to avoid being negatively perceived by the majority culture (Baker-Bell, 2020; McCluney et al., 2021).

Subtheme 1.4: Making Meaning of the Pain

Although there was a palpable sentiment of anger, frustration, and exhaustion, the participants discussed how they wanted to persist not only for them to succeed, but to help clear

the path for those Black women who follow them. The participants expressed that obtaining a doctorate degree is a privilege, as well as the need to give back and to provide people with resources and mentorship. The results are consistent with research that found Black women were able to gain positive meaning and greater self-determination from the negative experiences that were endured by being true to themselves, finding ways to give voice to their experiences, and by advocating for change for future Black female counselor educators to come (Cartwright et al., 2021).

Theme 2: The Costs

When asked, “What has it cost you to be in the CES program?” each participant paused and commented on the fact that they had never been asked that question before. One participant best summed up her feelings with, “I will say *everything*.” All participants described how the toll that getting their degree had on their physical fitness, mental health, family, quality of life, time, and motivation as they persevered to complete the CES program This is consistent with the limited research that found that the negative impact of oppression comes at the prohibitive cost of emotional instability, physical impairment, and psychological illness of Black women (Chan et al., 2018). However, accessing and sustaining self-care behaviors to offset the costs to these Black female scholars may require resources that are often inequitably distributed to communities of color (Wyatt & Ampadu, 2021).

Implications for Counselor Educators

The results of this study provide new insight into the experiences of Black female doctoral students in a CACREP-accredited CES program. The most significant finding was that the intersectional privilege and oppression dynamics experienced by Black females, which significantly affected their success, performance, and well-being in the program. The

participants' experiences of privilege and oppression suggests that there is substantial growth needed to address the lack of self-awareness of the intersectional dynamics of privilege and oppression, at outlined in the MSJCC, within CES programs. This is essential given the importance of counselor educators' self-awareness in providing an environment within the program that fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion. Thus, counselor educators must actively seek a self-awareness of their own knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to privilege, oppression, social group status, power, biases, etc., as well as to be aware of the intersectionality of privilege and oppression across the various identities of their students, as found in the MSJCC.

Using this intersectional perspective, counselor educators should become more aware of social inequities that may be embedded in the institution as well as in the department. As one participant noted, counselor educators are not "deliberately trying to be obtuse," but despite best intentions, implicit biases and institutional inequities can often create an unsafe place for Black women and other minoritized students. Thus, it is important that counselor educators foster an environment that will allow them to engage in uncomfortable conversations about privilege and oppression with their students as well with one another. Without this awareness, it is difficult to evaluate and identify how issues of power, privilege, oppression, and social justice are being addressed within the department.

The study findings also support the importance of counselor educators empowering their Black female students, as well as other minoritized students, to actively discuss oppression, giving space for their students' experiences, and providing a safe place for them to express their emotions and personal reactions. This includes being sensitive to the unique needs of minoritized students, particularly Black women, in dealing with academic, personal, or social issues. By

facilitating culturally sensitive interactions between faculty and students can help inform CES program culture as well as the curriculum. This requires CES programs to facilitate the building of supportive relationships among the faculty and their cohort. This will help promote the student support systems needed, particularly among Black women in the department.

Finally, the findings from this study revealed the toll that getting their degree had on their physical health, mental fitness, family, quality of life, time, and motivation as they persevered to complete the CES program. What was particularly noteworthy was the fact that all participants commented on the fact that they had never been asked that question before. It was also revealing when one participant best summed up her feelings with, “I will say *everything*.” These two sentences require programs to ask hard questions, such as “Why are we not asking Black women in our programs about the cost to them?” and “What needs to change so Black women graduate empowered, supported, and whole?” The answers to these questions can serve as a catalyst as counselor educators strive to increase DEI in their programs and integrate the MSJCC throughout the CES program.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study’s data were obtained from four Black female doctoral students, the analysis of the data demonstrated a rich saturation of the data. Additionally, participants who would be interested in participating in the study most likely had experienced various forms of privilege and oppression within their program and therefore found the topic relevant to their experiences. At the same time, the fear of retribution if identified through their narrative may have limited participant disclosures. However, these limitations do not diminish the importance of the findings that were derived from these participants. Finally, as a Black female doctoral student, I could relate to the subject matter, which required me to bracket for potential researcher

bias and consistently consult with my dissertation chair to process and manage these biases

Future Research

Future research should continue to explore the mental, physical, and emotional cost of Black female resilience as they persevere through CES programs. New research should highlight the need to increase awareness of intersectionality as a major paradigm of research and practice, as well as the multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations in CES programs (Joshi, 2021). Future research on CES practices with marginalized students can enhance critical thinking by using intersectionality theory (Chan et al., 2018). There is a need for future research to forge new pathways to consider the complexity of privilege and oppression concerning marginalized students and their experiences in counselor education and supervision programs (Chan et al., 2018). Despite their best intentions, counselor educators lack self-awareness and need to develop an understanding of the intersectionality of their students as they move from a single multicultural course design to the interweaving of MSJCC throughout CES programs.

Summary

This chapter detailed the qualitative thematic analysis that was used to answer the research questions. The results of the thematic analysis included 15 themes and 16 subthemes. These themes and subthemes describe the shared experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in CES programs. These can be used to ensure the inclusion of the Black female's unique voice in the construction of strategies to facilitate the development of awareness, advocacy, and cultural sensitivity in CES programs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

The purpose of the study is to examine how Black women experience privilege and oppression in the CES program. While counselor self-awareness of privilege and oppression is an essential aspect of multicultural and social justice counseling competence, there is little research on how graduate and doctoral programs address privilege and oppression with their students. We also know little about the prevalence of systemic privilege and oppression within the department itself. Understanding the perceptions, meanings, and experiences of Black women is critical for counselor educators so we can identify and address the impact that privilege and oppression in the CES programs. I want to thank you for your willingness to share your story.

As we go through the interview, please only answer to the level that you feel comfortable with answering. All the specifics will be made non-identifiable. You will also be able to review the transcript and remove anything you feel may be identifiable.

Because terms like privilege and oppression can bring up a lot of differing perspectives and meanings, it is important that I understand your definition and meaning when discussing privilege and oppression.

1. As a Black woman how would you describe privilege?
   a) How have your experiences shaped your views of privilege?
2. As a Black woman how would you describe oppression?
   b) How have your experiences shaped your views of oppression?

Black women experience education in similar and different ways than Black males and White women. So, I am going to ask you about your unique experiences as a Black women doctoral student in a counselor education program.

3. As a Black woman in a CES program, how would you describe the overall climate of the department in terms of feeling of equity, belonging, feeling respected, and included?
4. Do you feel that your department is aware of the presence of privilege in your doctoral program? How has this been addressed or not addressed
5. Do you feel your department is aware of the presence of oppression in your doctoral program? How was this addressed or not addressed?

Now we are going to talk about your experiences with faculty.

6. When you think about the program faculty, how would you describe their overall attitudes towards diversity, equity, and inclusion when working with their students?
7. Have you experienced times where faculty did not provide a climate of equity, safety, and inclusion for you as a student?
   a) Can you tell me how it impacted you?
   b) What did they do to make it an unsafe place for you?
8. Have you experienced times where faculty were seemingly unaware of how their attitudes (even if unintentional on their part), negatively impacted you as a student?

a) Did you feel that faculty members provided a safe space for you to discuss this experience?
b) Did you feel that it was properly addressed?

9. Have you experienced times where faculty fostered a climate of equity, safety, and inclusion for you as a Black woman?
   a) Can you tell me how it impacted you?
   b) What did they do to make it a safe place for you?

We are going to shift to the learning environment.

10. As a Black woman, how would you describe the overall climate in the learning environment in terms of feelings of equity, belonging, feeling respected, and included?
11. Are you able to discuss with faculty and students when you do not feel like you belong, are not respected, or not included in the classroom?
    a) If you did bring it up, did you feel understood (seen/heard) when discussing these constructs in the classroom?
    b) What would keep you from talking about times when you do not feel like you belonged, were not respected, or not included in class?
12. Based on your experiences, what would you need in a classroom environment that would allow you to feel safe enough to discuss how you feel?
13. When interacting with White peers outside of the classroom, how would you describe the overall quality in terms of equity, belonging, feeling respected, and included?
    a) Can you tell me how this impacts you?
    b) What did they do to make it either a safe or an unsafe place for you?

Let’s talk about the impact that your experiences have on you as a Black woman.

14. In your CES program, how free do you feel about showing your authentic self as a Black woman? (e.g., code-switching)
    a) What would happen if you were you?
    b) What keeps you from being you?
    c) What is it costing you as a person to be in this program?
15. What strategies have you found helpful when in an environment where you feel you cannot reflect who you are as a Black woman?
    a) Do you have strategies to “protect” yourself when dealing with people of privileged statuses? (e.g., code-switching, conforming, toning down your rhetoric) c. How does it make you feel when you have to employ strategies or coping mechanisms to protect yourself or to make others comfortable?

Closing

1. Based on your experiences, if you had one thing you could change in your program that would make it more inclusive for you, what would it be?
2. Before we end, as you reflect on your experiences, is there anything else you would

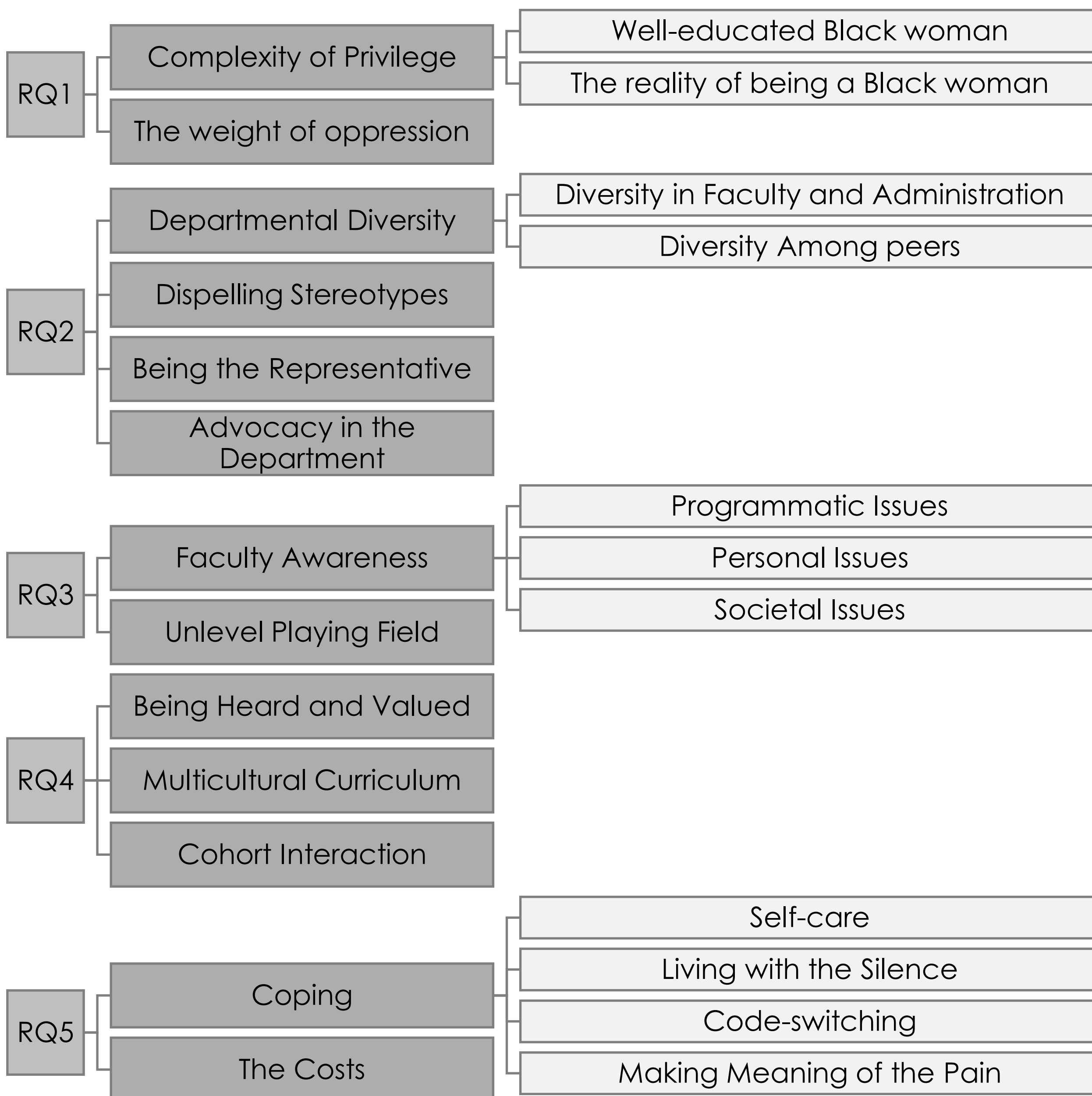
like to add that has been left unsaid?

Since this is a qualitative study, some probing and clarifying questions may be useful to gather meaning. Some preplanned probing/clarifying questions include, “tell me more”, “go on”, “did I understand you when you said…” “Did I paraphrase what you said correctly?”

APPENDIX B: Thematic Map for all Research Questions

Figure 8

Full thematic map for all research questions



APPENDIX C: Recruitment Letter

Dear Recipient:

As a doctoral student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision. The title of my research project is The Shared Experiences of Privilege and Oppression Among Black Females in Counselor Education and Supervision Programs: A Thematic Analysis. The purpose of my research is to examine the shared experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in counselor education and supervision doctoral programs.

Participants must be a Black female doctoral student who is either currently enrolled in a CACREP-accredited doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision or recently graduated within the past six months. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded 45-to 60-minute interview via Zoom and reflect on their experiences with privilege and oppression in their doctoral program. You will also complete a member checking of the interview transcript that will take 10 to 15 minutes. To determine your eligibility for the study, all potential participants will be asked to respond to a brief demographic questionnaire that can be completed in approximately 3 to 5 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

A consent document and demographic questionnaire are attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. To participate, please, complete the attached demographic questionnaire and send it to [redacted]. I will then provide more information/schedule an interview. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me prior to the time of the interview. Participants will receive a $20 Starbucks, Amazon, or Target gift card upon completion of the interview and member checking of the transcript.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Spellman, M.A.

APPENDIX C: Participant Questionnaire

Date: __________ Pseudonym (to be completed by researcher): ______________

1. Do you identify as Female? Yes _____ No _____

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

3. Are you currently enrolled in a CACREP-accredited doctoral-level Counselor Education and Supervision program?
Yes _____ No ____

4. If you responded Yes to Question 3, how long have you been a student in your current program? __________________

5. If you responded No to Question 3, have you recently graduated from a CACREP accredited doctoral Counselor Education program?
Yes _____ No ____ If Yes: Month/Year of Graduation: ______________

How do you want to be contacted?
Phone: ____________________
Email: __________________
Other: ____________________ (Please specify)

Please provide any additional information you would like me to know about.

APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Shared Experiences of Privilege and Oppression among Black Females in Counselor Education and Supervision programs: A Thematic Analysis
Principal Investigator: Kimberly Spellman, MA, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a must be a Black female doctoral student who is either currently enrolled in a CACREP-accredited doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision or recently graduated from your program within the past six months. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

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

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of the shared experiences of privilege and oppression among Black females in counselor education and supervision doctoral programs. The study seeks to identify the central themes that were identified from Black female doctoral students' narratives describing their interactions with their department. faculty and peers in their counselor education and supervision programs

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an audio-recorded 45-to 60-minute interview via Zoom.
2. Review the interview transcript for accuracy. Revise or remove any transcript content to ensure that the data accurately reflects your voice (10-15 minutes).

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include gaining a greater understanding of Black female doctoral students' experiences of privilege and oppression within their doctoral programs. Understanding the perceptions, meanings, and experiences of Black women is critical for counselor educators so we can identify and address the impact that privilege and oppression in doctoral programs.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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

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

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participation with a $20 Starbucks, Amazon, or Target gift card, which will be emailed to participants upon completion of the interview and member checking of the transcript.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

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

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Kimberly Spellman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [redacted] or at [redacted] You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Mary Deacon, at mmdeacon@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal

regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed *or* alluded to by student and faculty researchers *are those* of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

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

____________________________________ Printed Subject Name

____________________________________ Signature & Date