A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE PERSISTENCE OF WORKING-

CLASS AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN COUNSELOR

EDUCATION

by

LONIKA CRUMB

(Under the Direction of Laura A. Dean)

ABSTRACT

A sparse literature base informs our knowledge regarding how social class status influences the educational experiences of African-American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Researchers have identified that African American women doctoral students in counselor education at PWIs report differential experiences due to their race and gender statuses (Henfield, Owens, & Witherspoon, 2011; Henfield, Woo, & Washington, 2013). The impact that social class status has on the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education at PWIs is often unnoticed. Researchers have provided evidence that ethnic minority women and students from working-class backgrounds may face unique obstacles integrating into and persisting in doctoral education at PWIs (Cueva, 2013; Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; Jones, 2003). This phenomenological inquiry explored the lived experiences of working-class African American women students enrolled in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs. Situated in Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2009) and the Social Class Worldview Model (Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004), the study illustrated how the experiences of African

American women doctoral students are mediated by a working-class social class status. Using semi-structured interviews, the author identified three themes that influence the persistence of working-class African American women doctoral students in counselor education. The three core themes identified were: 1) Working-Class Virtues, 2) Development of Self-Efficacy and Resiliency, and 3) Utilization of Personal and Academic Support Systems.

INDEX WORDS: Working-Class, Social Class, African American Women, Doctoral Education, Counselor Education, Persistence, Black Feminist Thought, Social Class Worldview Model

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DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God, You have carried me through this entire process. You promised to never leave or forsake me. Your mercy and grace have helped me to persist each day. Earning my doctorate is proof that all things are possible to those who believe in You. I love and thank You.

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INTRODUCTION

"Class differences were boundaries no one wanted to face or talk about. It was easier to

downplay them, to act as though we were all from privileged backgrounds, to work around them,

to confront them privately…Yet these class realities separated me from fellow students."

(hooks, p. 75, 1989)

The words of bell hooks (1989), a renowned cultural theorist and scholar, reflect her

experiences integrating into the campus culture of a predominantly White university as an

African American woman from a working-class background. In her novel *Talking Back,*

Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black, hooks described how her working-class status, along with

her race and gender status, distinguished her educational experiences, yet social class was rarely

a topic of interest or concern within her university setting. Several researchers have

acknowledged that social class status pervades the social climate and academic discourse in

graduate education, though a small number of studies have addressed this phenomenon (Cutri,

Manning, & Chun, 2011; hooks, 2000; Jones, 2003; Nelson, Englar-Carlson, Tierney, & Hau,

2006; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Ostrove, Stewart, & Curtin, 2011).

Scholars have argued that there is a *silence* related to social class status in the educational

literature (hooks, 2000; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Nelson et al., 2006; Rubin et al., 2014).

Moreover, hooks (2000) asserted that much scholarly attention is given to African American

women's race and gender statuses, but little to their social class status. Social class status is

closely bound to other sociodemographic variables, such as age, race/ethnicity, religion, and

geographic location in educational contexts (Rubin et al., 2014). Collins (2009) asserted that scholars should view African American women's experiences as an interlocking system of race, class, and gendered experiences, and analyses should focus on how these identities interconnect. The consideration of social class status has wide-reaching implications for building knowledge about how to facilitate and support educational success for African American women students in graduate education programs at PWIs.

King (1988) coined the term "multiple jeopardy" to refer to how African American women are affected by simultaneous oppressions due to their social class status, as well as their race and gender, as they strive for upward mobility through education (p. 47). Disproportionally more African American women exist below and slightly above poverty level in the United States (U.S.) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Accordingly, African Americans and women are overrepresented among the working-class student population in American higher education settings (Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Rubin, 2012). Researchers have indicated that a working-class social class status influences students' academic success as well as their psychological and emotional wellbeing in doctoral level education (Nelson et al., 2006; Richardson, Lawrence-Brown, & Paige, 2004; Ryan & Sackrey, 1984; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993; Warnock & Appel, 2012). Salanda (1994) identified that heightened stress levels, catalyzed by a lower social class status, are more pronounced in college students of color. The extant research on social class, gender, and race relations in higher education has laid important groundwork, yet the emphasis has not been on examining the experiences of working-class African American women in doctoral programs. Further research is necessary, as researchers have suggested that doctoral level education is perceived as a means for upward socioeconomic mobility for ethnic minority women from working-class backgrounds (Cueva, 2013; Cutri et al., 2011; Jones, 2003).

Examining how a working-class social class status affects African American women as they navigate doctoral level counselor education programs in particular can serve to enhance the understanding of their experiences more completely. Literature broadly shows that African American women doctoral students across various academic disciplines at PWI's report experiences of cultural isolation, tokenism, invisibility, lack of mentoring, and discrimination due to their race and gender statuses (Gildersleeve, Croom, Vasquez, 2011; Grant, 2012; Sule, 2009). The educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in the discipline of counselor education are underrepresented in the literature, although a few researchers have noted their experiences. Knowles and Bryant (2011) suggested that African American women in counselor education doctoral programs are socially prescribed the cultural ethos of caring which may add pressure to the expected educational and professional roles. The controlling image of African American women as a Mammy, a faithful and obedient servant who frequently places the well-being of others before her own well-being, is a socio-historical stereotype that African American women counseling students may face (Bryant et al., 2005; Collins, 2009).

Scholars have asserted that African American women in counselor education are often cast into the role of Mammy in which they are treated as though they can handle multiple taxing situations that involve an unhealthy degree of self-sacrifice (Bryant et al., 2005). Other researchers refer to this image as the *strong Black superwoman*, which suggests that an African American woman is a consummate student and professional who can handle any life circumstance and can be depended upon for all persons who need her (Collins, 2000; Hinton, 2010; Morgan, 1999). Collins (2009) asserted that stereotypes and controlling images serve to normalize oppression by making it seem as though certain behaviors are a part of the oppressed

person's nature. These controlling images not only marginalize African American women doctoral students, but also affect their academic performance (Hinton, 2010; Shavers & Moore, 2014).

 Equally concerning, Roach and Young (2007) asserted that counselors and counseling students often have to model healthy behavior for their clients or colleagues, which may suppress their willingness to seek help for their own needs. The additional expectations and reluctance to seek help may be physically, mentally, and spiritually taxing for African American women doctoral students in counselor education (Bryant et al., 2005; Knowles & Bryant, 2011).

While researchers have examined how gender, race, and academic discipline may influence the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education, there is limited understanding regarding the influences of social class. Literature has shown that working-class and ethnic minority doctoral students face significantly more obstacles in doctoral education due to their low socioeconomic origins when compared to their middle and upper-class peers (Holley & Gardner, 2012; Warnock & Appel, 2012). Psychological distress (Hodgson & Simoni, 1995), decreased ability to focus, and pressure to graduate sooner are among many factors frequently cited as the direct effects of financial challenges faced by working-class ethnic minority students in advanced degree programs (Cueva, 2013; Holley & Gardner, 2012; Warnock & Appel, 2012). Researchers found that working-class women doctoral students at PWIs are less likely to disclose their distress to faculty and peers (Cueva, 2013; Richardson et al., 2004).

The unwillingness to disclose distress related to the shame and inferiority attached to a working-class status (i.e., internalized classism) could be detrimental to the academic performance of working-class women in doctoral programs (Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993).

Nevertheless, the relationship between a working-class social class status and persistence in doctoral level education has not received much focused attention in empirical studies. Studies that have included measures of social class status as part of a wider exploratory investigation of students' experiences and persistence have generally addressed the relationship between social class and educational experiences relatively indirectly or coincidently (Rubin, 2012). To date, few research studies have directly investigated how social class status affects African American women's experiences in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs.

The culture of doctoral education at PWIs has an influence on the academic performance and social integration of African American women students (Felder, Stevenson, & Gasman, 2014; Grant, 2012; Shavers & Moore, 2014). Doctoral education has been denoted as a predominantly White environment that disseminates White middle-class cultural values (Jones, 2004). Researchers have purported that PWIs remain a chilly climate for historically marginalized students (Hall & Sandler, 1984) due to the classist (Gonzalez, 2006; Jones, 2004), racist (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Espino, 2012; Gildersleeve et al., 2011), and sexist practices (Gonzalez, 2006; Hall & Sandler, 1984) inherent in these institutions. The culture of doctoral education encompasses a socialization process in which doctoral students learn customs, traditions, and values through peer and faculty interactions, mentoring relationships, and engaging in research, service, and teaching (Felder et al., 2014; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Grant, 2012; Strayhorn, 2013; Turner & Thompson, 1993). Rubin et al. (2014) asserted that working-class students are less familiar with the established cultural norms of universities. The tension of managing multiple minority statuses while integrating into the middle-class culture of doctoral education at PWIs can be academically, socially, and emotionally challenging for working-class African American women (Jones, 2003; Rodriguez, 2006).

Despite the obstacles that African American women doctoral students encounter at PWIs, African American women have made profound advancements in higher education (Gonzales, Allum, & Sowell, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). According to the 2012 Condition of Education report, African American women earned 68% of associate's degrees, 66% of bachelor's degrees, 71% of master's degrees, and 65% of all doctoral degrees awarded to African American students in the 2009-2010 school year (Aud et al., 2012). Data on trends in higher education show that African American women comprise one of the largest groups of students of color enrolled in advanced degree programs (Gonzales et al., 2013). African American women continue to outpace their African American male counterparts and other ethnic minority groups (i.e., Hispanics, American Indian/ Alaska Native) in doctoral degree attainment (Henry, Butler, & West, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Researchers have asserted that earning a graduate degree has a greater impact in helping to close the economic gap via the higher education track more than any other factor (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2008), which may be advantageous for working-class African American women doctoral students.

While reports show a substantial increase in educational attainment among African American women, research conducted on the experiences of African American women in higher education illustrate findings that are counterproductive to educational success (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007; Henry et al., 2011). Research on the experiences of African American women in doctoral level education reveal themes of alienation (Grant & Simmons, 2008; Hinton, 2010), exclusion (Henry et al., 2011; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001), and inferiority (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). African American women students have reported increased struggles with low self-esteem (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Griffin, Chavous,

Cogburn, Branch, & Sellers, 2012), difficulty establishing relationships with peers (Henry et al., 2011), and decreased sense of belonging in their doctoral programs (Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Strayhorn, 2013).

There is an apparent disconnect between the body of literature that portrays the difficulties and negative experiences of African American women doctoral students and reports of their continued educational success. Chavous and Cogburn (2007) asserted that "within the educational literature, African American women are rarely highlighted as examples of academic excellence and resilience and often are not even mentioned at all" (p. 26). Researchers emphasized that African American women's achievement processes and positive academic experiences in doctoral education are consistently ignored despite their accomplishments (Morris, 2008; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Sule, 2009). When African American women's educational experiences are analyzed, the emphasis is typically on their increased at-risk status and negative academic experiences owing to their membership in two socially stigmatized groups (i.e., race and gender) (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007). Given the concerns in the research, African American women's experiences in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs warrant a critical analysis.

Statement of the Problem

The current state of research on the doctoral education experiences of African American women and the research related to social class status impart three significant problems. First, the study of African American women doctoral education experiences seldom provide an *emic* perspective of how a working-class status influences students' successful persistence. A large portion of research studies that examined the influence of social class status on educational experiences has been conducted using quantitative methodological approaches (Liu, Soleck,

Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004; Rubin et al., 2014). Objective measures are often acontextual, overlook intersectionality, and fail to assess the subjective experiences of social class (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Rubin et al., 2014). As a result, students' personal perspectives and insights are repeatedly excluded from the literature. A qualitative study that cogently examines how a working-class status influences the doctoral education experiences of African American women from an emic perspective is warranted.

Second, an ample amount of research conducted on the educational experiences of women of color is conducted by and analyzed from the perspectives of White, middle-class researchers (Pollard & Welch, 2006). Pollard and Welch (2006) attested that women of color research participants are routinely marginalized and perceived as deviant when their behavior and attitudes are analyzed solely from the perspectives of White, middle-class researchers. Following this further, much of the research that has addressed working-class status reflects the experiences of working-class White women and men (Richardson et al., 2004; Ryan & Sackrey, 1996; Tokarczyk & Fay; 1993). The lives of working-class African American women cannot be seen as a variation of a general model of White American womanhood or manhood (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Ethnic minority researchers emphasized the importance of self-definition in research and allowance of African American women to tell their own story in order to provide counterhegemonic interpretations and uplift the marginalized voice (Collins, 1986, 2009; Pollard & Welch, 2006).

Third, researchers have yet to provide a comprehensive explanation of the continual academic achievement of African American women in doctoral education despite the recurring reports of their negative experiences (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007). Researchers have repeatedly disregarded the academic achievement of African American women in higher education (Bell-

Scott, 1984; Chavous & Cogburn, 2007; Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Moreover, educational research on people of color has often taken a problem-focused orientation or used deficit-orientated ideology (Louque & Garcia, 2000; Pollard & Welch, 2006; Strayhorn, 2013; Sule, 2009). Chavous and Cogburn (2007) argued that African American women hold the status of "superinvisible" in the context of educational literature, due to the exclusion and misrepresentation of their academic experiences (p. 28). Other scholars have echoed a similar perspective by asserting that researchers most often document the misfortunes and subordination of African American women's experiences in higher education (LeSavoy, 2010). The positive academic experiences of African American women in doctoral programs, including those in counselor education, are largely absent in the literature.

Excluding the experiences and academic achievements of African American women in counselor education research, in conjunction with a deficit ideology, further perpetuates messages of inferiority and the invisibility of African American women students. Excluding the experiences of ethnic minority students seems counterintuitive in a field that values inclusivity and promotes respect for human dignity and diversity. The continual omission of positive academic experiences may place African American female college students, both undergraduate and graduate, at risk for developing disconcerting connections between their self-worth and academic achievement that negatively impact their psychological and emotional wellbeing (Griffin et al., 2012; Shavers & Moore, 2014). Resistance to these more subtle forms of systemic oppression in educational research is critical. A transformation of hegemonic conceptual paradigms and research practices is needed in order to recognize the academic achievements of African American women and support their inclusion in PWIs and in the counselor education literature. In an effort to address the aforementioned theoretical and empirical problems, the

current study explored the lived experiences of working-class African American women who were successfully persisting in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to develop an in-depth understanding of how a working-class social class status influences the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs. The goal of this research was to capture the lived experiences of African American women doctoral students who identify as working-class. I sought to gain insight on the academic, social, and emotional experiences of working-class African American women students as they pursued doctoral study in counselor education programs at PWIs. The research question that guided the study was:

1. What are the lived experiences of working-class African American women students in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs?

Defining Social Class

Liu (2011) argued that the shortcoming of counseling research studies that examine social class is the failure to define terms, or the poor operationalization of terms, related to social class status. Researchers have used over 400 terms (e.g., poor, affluent, poverty, economically disadvantaged, lower class) to implicate social class or constructs related to socioeconomic status (Liu et al., 2004). Such complications in definitions may have led to the paucity of research that examines the influence that a working-class social class status has on students' educational experiences (Karen, 1991; Walpole, 2007). In response to the previous shortcomings, the concept of social class for the present study was informed by the definitions established by Gilbert (2008):

1. Underclass: Individuals with limited or erratic participation in the labor force, many are dependent on government support.

2. Working-poor class: Individuals employed in low-skill jobs and service industries. Their incomes are below mainstream living standards, and they cannot depend on steady employment.

3. Working-class: Individuals employed in manual labor or clerical jobs. Incomes are relatively stable and sufficient to maintain a living standard just below the mainstream.

4. Middle-class: Individuals with college degrees who are typically employed in white collar occupations. Middle-class individuals are often able to afford a comfortable, mainstream lifestyle.

5. Upper middle-class: College trained professionals who often have advanced degrees and hold upper managerial positions or have privately owned businesses that provide access to higher incomes.

6. Capitalist class: Individuals who possess considerable wealth and assets.

Liu (2011) and Walpole (2007) suggested that rather than focusing on the idiosyncrasies of the terms related to economic disadvantage, it is more important for the researcher to focus on (a) the intention of the research being conducted, and (b) what the researcher is interested in about the population. The phenomenon of interest in this study is the lived experiences of working-class African American women doctoral students, and the intention is to identify what factors contribute to their successful persistence in doctoral programs at PWIs.

For the purpose of this study, *social class* is defined as an economically and socially stratified group of individuals who share similar norms, values, and cultural experiences (Liu, 2011). Social class is often associated with status differences that act as a basis for

discrimination and prejudice (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Rubin et al., 2014). A person's social class typically remains static across generations (Jones & Vagle, 2013; Rubin et al., 2014). A *working-class social class status* is operationalized in this study to encompass groups labeled as working-poor, under-class, and any additional labels that reference individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Researchers have indicated that students in each of these categories face similar challenges in their access to and completion of college (Walpole, 2007). The objective of linking the labels of economic disadvantage is to move toward collective agency and to designate a group identity for the stratified socioeconomic group (Arena, 2011; Karen, 1991; Walpole, 2007).

Definitions of Additional Key Terms

The key terms used in the study are defined as follows:

- *Doctoral education:* doctoral programs granting a doctor of philosophy degree (Ph.D.).

- *African American*: a U.S. citizen who has origins in any racial or ethnic groups of Africa. African American and Black are used interchangeably. Participants were allowed to self-identify their race/ethnicity.

- *Women*: identification with the female gender.

- *Doctoral persistence*: the continuation of a student's progress toward the completion of a doctoral degree (Bair, 1999; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012)

- *Predominately White Institution:* an institution of higher education in which White students account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

Conceptual Frameworks

Black Feminist Thought

In order to gain a richer understanding of the cultural strengths and resiliency strategies of working-class African American women doctoral students, it is essential to examine their educational experiences using a framework that addresses the historical, economic, and sociopolitical contexts of African American women's lives (Collins, 2009; Henry et al., 2011; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Black Feminist Thought (BFT) is a framework that provides a foundation for understanding the experiences of African American women students in higher education at PWIs (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). BFT is an outgrowth of Black feminist literature that centralizes African American women's perspectives of their self, their families, and society (Collins, 2009). African American female intellectuals frequently reference BFT as a framework when conducting research to transform Eurocentric, patriarchal, and classist practices in U.S. higher education (Collins, 1986; Grant, 2012; Henry et al., 2011; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Rodriguez, 2006; Sule, 2009). Grant (2012) stated that BFT is valuable in helping African-American female doctoral students to effectively deal with the wide array of "microaggressive indignities" encountered daily at PWIs (p. 106), which are often antecedents to distress and adversity (Henry et al., 2011).

The key themes that underlie BFT are (a) affirmation of the importance of a Black woman's self-definition, self-determination, and self-valuation; (b) attention to the interlocking nature of class, race, and gender oppression; (c) the importance of African American women's culture; and (d) a valuation of the dialogical practices of African American intellectuals in producing knowledge (Collins, 2009). Howard-Hamilton (2003) suggested that BFT adds an important element of depth to understandings the challenges and needs of African American

women in higher education. BFT emphasizes the multiple jeopardy experiences (King, 1988) of being an African American woman and denounces the idea that an African American woman's identity can be fragmented and ranked (Henry et al., 2011). Collins argued that race and gender are far from being the only significant identities that beget discrimination toward African American women. Collins asserted that class, sexuality, religion and other identities all matter greatly in understanding the experiences of African American women within the U.S. social structure. BFT values the knowledge that African American women gain as a result of their life experiences and does not predicate the experiences of African American women on the experiences of dominant groups (Grant, 2012; Rodriguez, 2006).

Collins (1986) espoused that Black female intellectuals who are in touch with their marginality in academic settings are able to produce a distinctive analysis of class, race, and gender due to their position. Collins used the term "the outsider within" to reference this unique position (p. 14). The use of BFT as a framework allowed me to assess the social and cultural capital gained from positions of marginality that are corollary to oppression (Collins, 1986). Using BFT as a framework enabled me to name the experiences and oppositional worldviews of working-class African American women that are absent in scholarly text (hook, 1989; Rodriguez, 2006). hooks (2000) stated that worldviews and strategies of resilience must be articulated and named if they are to provide a sustained blue print for change (p. 76).

Feminist scholar Regina Austin called specifically for female scholars of color to collectively advocate alongside, with, and on the behalf of other ethnic minority women (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). By situating this study in BFT, my hope is to capture the strategies of resilience and resistance that are unique to working-class African American women. Researchers asserted that there is a perceptive bond of sisterhood that occurs when Black women

interview other Black women that constructs trust and prompts dialogue, which are ideal in qualitative research (Collins, 2009; Johnson-Bailey, 1999). As the author of this study, an African American female doctoral student and social justice advocate, my objective was to give voice to working-class African American women in doctoral level education. The framework of BFT allowed me to fuse social justice oriented scholarship with advocacy (Lewis, Ratts, Paladino, & Toporek, 2011; Toporek, Lewis & Creathar, 2009) in order to shift studies on the educational experiences of African American women from a deficit-oriented ideology to a culturally responsive, strength-based framework. Using BFT as a framework for the current study granted African American women students the opportunity to voice their own experiences and concerns, particularly those related to class, race, and gender in doctoral education environments.

Social Class Worldview Model

The Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) is a subjective and phenomenological approach to understanding individual experiences and perceptions of social class (Liu et al., 2004). The three key assumptions of SCWM are (1) social class operates at an individual and subjective level in people's lives, (2) social class at the individual level is a socially constructed phenomenon derived from the individual's perceptions of his or her sociocultural environment, and (3) individuals seek congruency between various domains of their world view as a way to cope with the demands and expectations of their economic culture (Liu et al., 2004). SCWM comprises five domains (a) Consciousness, Attitudes and Saliency, (b) Referent Groups, (c) Property Relationships, (d) Lifestyle, and (e) Behaviors (Liu et al., 2004).

The domain of Consciousness, Attitudes and Saliency is a focal interest in the current study. The Consciousness, Attitudes and Saliency domain reflects an individual's capacity to

articulate and understand the relevance and meaningfulness of social class in his or her life (Liu, 2012). Meaningfulness is tied to specific ways social class is experienced (i.e., pride or shame related to social class status). Liu (2012) and Liu and Ali (2008) proposed that individuals have varying levels of understanding related to how they perceive themselves as socially classed persons. Liu (2012) stated "social classes have embedded economic hierarchies with in-groups and out-groups; with the out-groups (e.g., people in lower social positions) being the target of derision and marginalization" (p. 330). The differential treatment of individuals based on perceived social class status is referred to as *classism*, which is prevalent in higher education settings (Langhout, Drake, & Rosselli, 2009).

Liu (2012) contended that it is critical for researchers who examine social class to examine the participants' level of social class consciousness. Social class consciousness is necessary to understand how class operates in a person's life and is interconnected with other identities (Lui, 2012; Rubin et al., 2014). An individual's awareness of a working-class social class status is mediated by perceptions, which are influenced by race, class, and gender (Rubin et al., 2014). The SCWM allowed me to embrace a subjective view of social class experiences, with consideration of the important within group experiences that influence the participants' perception of working-class status. The SCWM provided me with a foundation to understand how a working-class status differentially affects the African American woman's doctoral education experiences in academic environments.

Delimitations

There are delimitations that are relative to this study. Literature that explores students' experiences in counselor education doctorate programs is scant and largely conceptual (Goodrich, Shin, & Smith, 2011). Researchers have called for more studies that explore

students' experiences in counselor education doctoral programs (Goodrich et al., 2011; Henfield et al., 2013; Protivnak & Foss, 2009). The current study served to further the research on students' experiences in counselor education doctoral programs. The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) directory identified that 74% of counselor education and supervision programs grant solely the Ph.D. degree (CACREP, 2014). Because majority of the accredited counselor education and supervision programs grant the Ph.D. degree, and the Ph.D. typically represents the most rigorous form of doctoral study, I only selected students currently enrolled in Ph.D. counselor education programs.

CACREP establishes practical standards and uniformity of training for accredited counselor education and supervision doctoral programs. CACREP standards set forth a commitment to multicultural and social justice-oriented training for future counselors to ensure that students demonstrate knowledge in social and cultural diversity (Goodrich et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2006). To this end, students in CACREP programs are expected to understand the "cultural context of relationships, issues, and trends in a multicultural society—including characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, acculturative experiences, and concerns within and among diverse groups" (CACREP Standards 2009, Section 2. G. 2). For this reason, I only selected students from CACREP accredited counselor education Ph.D. programs due to their exposure to topics and issues related to marginalization, oppression, and social justice. It was anticipated that working-class African American women in CACREP accredited counselor education Ph.D. programs would be able to engage in a complex analysis of how social class status influences their educational experiences. Collins (1986) asserted that African American women who have a concrete understanding of marginalization and the mismatch of their

experiences in comparison to dominant groups are likely to take a critical posture toward experiences of oppression. I was aware that the selection of this specific subgroup of students could influence the findings of the study.

Significance of Study

The current study contributed significantly to the literature on African American women's doctoral education experiences in counselor education and social class research. Scholars have not only called for more research in doctoral education, but also discipline specific research (Baird, 1990) such as in the areas of counselor education (Goodrich et al., 2011). Educational researchers have already taken an interest in how race and gender influence the doctoral education experiences of African American women (Grant, 2012; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Sule, 2009); however, few researchers have directly examined the influence of social class within this group (hooks, 2000; Jones, 2003, 2004). The information ascertained from this study may help working-class African American women students and other working-class students understand how to successfully navigate doctoral programs at PWIs. Hearing the voices and personal perspectives of fellow working-class students may empower other working-classed students who might otherwise feel estranged and alienated from doctoral level education (hooks, 2000). The findings from this study also provided data that may assist faculty and staff in supporting the educational success of counselor education doctoral students with multiple minority statuses. Data from the study may help PWIs address issues of classism and implement policies and procedures to ensure that the campus climate is welcoming and supportive of working-class African American women students.

Chapter Summary

The information in this introductory chapter provided an overview regarding the doctoral education experiences of working-class African American women students at PWIs. Reports have shown that African American women are advancing in doctoral level education in spite of marginalization and unwelcoming environments. Information gleaned from empirical studies identified that doctoral students from working-class backgrounds face additional obstacles due to finances and unfamiliarity with navigating doctoral level education, which may impact their academic performance, socialization, and psychological wellbeing. I identified that qualitative studies are needed to capture the experiences of working-class students and there is a need to examine factors that influence the educational success of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs. The tenets of Black Feminist Thought and Social Class Worldview Model were explicated and proposed as lenses that are most suitable for understanding the lived experiences of working-class African American women students, due to the value these frameworks place on honoring subjective experiences and varying dimensions of identity. The next chapter provides a review of existing literature regarding the circumstances and experiences working-class students and African American women students face in doctoral level counselor education programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to the doctoral education experiences of working-class African American women in counselor education programs at PWIs. The selected review of the literature serves two purposes. First, the selected literature informs the study's purpose to increase the understanding of how a working-class social class status may influence the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs. Second, the selected literature aims to highlight the positive academic experiences of African American women Ph.D. students at PWIs and what factors influence their educational success. The chapter contains literature related to (a) social class and higher education, (b) working-class status in doctoral education, (c) utilization of multiple forms of capital, and (d) factors that support doctoral persistence for working-class African American women doctoral students in counselor education at PWIs. I begin the chapter with an overview of social-class and higher education to provide a context for understanding the influence that a working-class status has on the attainment of doctoral level education. The literature review will conclude with a summary of how the various factors coalesce and an explanation of why further research is needed.

Social Class and Higher Education

During the era of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, President Lyndon Johnson expressed the need to increase higher education opportunities for economically disadvantaged students who had less access to higher education (Cervantes et al., 2005; Kahlenberg, 2004). President

Johnson called for a "War on Poverty" and proposed legislation to encourage colleges and

universities to increase resources and programs that would contribute to the economic prosperity

of the nation (Cervantes et al., 2005). In response, Congress passed the Higher Education Act

(HEA) of 1965 that offered federally backed financial aid to economically disadvantaged

students in an effort to support their participation in postsecondary education (Council for

Opportunity in Education, 2005). The HEA initiated the establishment of grants and federally

funded education opportunity programs (e.g., Pell Grant, TRIO, and Educational Talent Search)

that helped economically disadvantaged ethnic minority students prepare and pay for college

(Cervantes et al., 2005; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). In addition, other federal policies such as the 1964

Civil Rights Act served as an impetus in the active recruitment of ethnic minorities and women

into all levels of higher education (Cervantes et al., 2005; Henfield, Owens, Witherspoon, 2011).

The success of the HEA and the Civil Rights Act has helped millions of economically

disadvantaged ethnic minority women students attend college (Kahlenberg, 2004). However,

with the rising cost of college and growing income inequality, government support is no longer

completely sufficient in meeting the needs of economically disadvantaged students from

working-class backgrounds (Jackson & Reynolds, 2013; Kahlenberg, 2004; Perna & Jones,

2013). The perpetual shift in federal financial aid funding from grants to loans has impacted

working-class students' participation and persistence in higher education (Jackson & Reynolds,

2013; Kahlenberg, 2004; Perna & Jones, 2013). The total amount of student debt in the U.S. has

almost tripled in the past 10 years, from $363 billion in 2005 to more than $1.2 trillion currently

(Jackson & Reynolds, 2013). Jackson and Reynolds (2013) found that African American

students from working-class backgrounds were more likely to rely on student loans due to

intergenerational inequality and having fewer parental resources to apply toward college expenses.

The probability of accumulating additional student loan debt may impede working-class African American women students' aspirations of seeking a post-graduate degree (Perna, 2010; Perna & Jones, 2013; Walpole, 2003, 2007). Many working-class undergraduate students who persist to graduation often forgo enrolling in advanced-degree programs and enter the workforce to pay off student loan debt (Ethington & Smart, 1986; Perna, 2010; Perna & Jones, 2013; Walpole, 2003). Walpole (2003) found that working-class students who do choose to pursue a master's degree report low aspirations of attaining a Ph.D. The attainment of a Ph.D. is a key way for working-class African American students to achieve upward social and economic mobility (Sanchez, Lui, Leathers, Goins, & Vilain, 2011). Researchers have identified a positive correlation between the level of degree earned (e.g., bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree) and one's level of income and social class status (Ensminger & Fothergill, 2003; Sanchez et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the factors and educational experiences that promote Ph.D. attainment for working-class African American women students are seldom explicated.

Navigating Doctoral Education as a Working-Class Student

Unmet Financial Needs

Numerous research studies have indicated the importance of financial aid in predicting doctoral persistence (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Bair & Haworth, 1999; Harsch, 2008; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011; Willis & Carmichael, 2011). After factoring in financial aid packages, *unmet financial needs* (i.e., the cost of attending college minus financial aid packages) are considerably higher for working-class doctoral students (Cueva, 2013; Holly & Gardner, 2012; Kahlenberg, 2004). Doctoral study often entails additional costs in order to fund conference

attendance, travel, professional association fees, and research material (Holly & Gardner, 2012; Hughes & Kleist, 2005; Strayhorn, 2013).

Working-class ethnic minority women Ph.D. students have to overcome more obstacles related to finances (Cueva, 2013; Jones, 2003; Warnock & Appel, 2012). Warnock and Appel (2012) conducted a mixed-method comparative analysis to determine the extent to which perceived success and support in doctoral education vary by students' social class backgrounds. The researchers selected a sample of 273 students enrolled in sociology Ph.D. programs from various universities, who identified as middle/upper class or working/lower class.

Warnock and Appel's (2012) study provided evidence that working-class students were comparatively disadvantaged in the areas of financial support and academic integration. The findings indicated that working-class students were more likely to take out loans in higher dollar amounts to fund graduate school. A working-class African American female in the study reported that she experienced significant pressure due to financial constraints and felt the "need to graduate sooner" because of the extensive loan debt she had accumulated throughout her undergraduate and graduate studies (p. 318). Another working-class female student stated

> "I felt like I had more burdens to bear than my peers. This made me feel like they had the advantage of being able to focus on school rather than making ends meet while I had more trouble focusing on my work." (Warnock & Appel, 2012, p. 318)

Similar findings were identified in an autobiographical study by working-class women Ph.D. students (Richardson et al., 2004). Richardson et al. (2004) asserted that working-class women doctoral students at PWIs were less likely to disclose that they experienced heightened levels of distress related to financial challenges to program faculty and peers. The unwillingness

to disclose financial distress stemming from internalized classism may negatively affect the doctoral persistence of working-class women at PWIs (Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993).

Although researchers have identified that unmet financial needs affect working-class doctoral students' educational experiences, some researchers have proposed ways that African American women Ph.D. students and working-class doctoral students navigate barriers that may impede educational success (Jones, 2003; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith, 2004). Lewis et al.'s (2004) qualitative study of successful African American Ph.D. students at a PWI found that students with limited resources were more likely to persist to graduation if they accessed external resources early in their doctoral studies. Findings from other studies identified that class-conscious faculty members support the educational success of working-class women by arranging graduate assistantships or connecting students to personal support networks outside of the institution (Jones, 2003; Richardson et al., 2004). Ampaw and Jaeger (2012) reported that institutional resources, such as research assistantships, offer students of color the opportunity to develop substantial relationships with supportive faculty members. Furthermore, Ampaw and Jaeger noted that doctoral students with research assistantships are more likely to complete each stage of doctoral education when compared to students with any other type of financial support. According to Tinto (1993), a noted theorist of doctoral student persistence, students are often willing to persist despite considerable economic hardships if they feel valued and supported in their educational endeavors. In essence, researchers have illustrated that supportive faculty and institutional resources may contribute to the educational success of African American women and working-class doctoral students at PWIs regardless of their limited resources or unmet financial needs.

Enrollment Status

Full-time enrollment is strongly associated with doctoral persistence (Wao, Dedrick, & Ferron, 2011; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Doctoral students with limited financial resources are inclined to enroll in doctoral programs part-time (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). Likewise, women are more likely to enroll in doctoral education part-time due to financial and familial obligations (Morris, 2008). Johnson-Bailey (1999) highlighted that working-class African American women doctoral students reported having competing external commitments to graduate study (e.g., jobs, children, spouses, household responsibilities). Because of limited financial resources and competing external commitments, working-class African American women doctoral students may be inclined attend graduate school part-time (Morris, 2008).

Part-time enrollment affects the academic and social integration of students, particularly within their department or program (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Ott, Markewich, & Ochsner, 1984; Wao et al., 2011). Part-time doctoral students have limited interactions with faculty and peers and less involvement in program-related activities (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). Student development theorists suggested that students benefit from the quantity and quality of involvement with faculty and peers and from participation in campus organizations (Astin, 1985; Pike, Smart, Kuh, & Hayek, 2005). CACREP-accredited counselor education doctoral programs necessitate substantial levels of involvement in the academic environment, as these programs require student involvement in teaching, supervision, and research (Pate, 1990). The effects of part-time enrollment in counselor education doctoral programs seemingly pose an issue for working-class African American women that warrants further investigation.

Researchers have provided information that sheds light on the status and effects of part-time enrollment in counselor education doctoral programs. Goodrich et al. (2011) conducted a

survey of 16 CACREP-accredited counselor education doctoral programs that provided data related to the departmental characteristics and the enrollment status of counselor education doctoral students. The researchers found that 10 of the programs admitted part-time students, while six of the programs admitted full-time students only. The programs that allowed part-time enrollment identified that 32% of students were enrolled part-time. Findings from Goodrich et al.'s study indicate that counselor education doctoral programs typically allow part-time enrollment. Yet a significant number of programs continue to limit admission to fulltime enrollment (Goodrich et al., 2011; Pate, 1990).

Goodrich et al. emphasized that full-time enrollment versus part-time enrollment options contain matters related to access and social justice. Working-class, ethnic minority women students may not have the privilege to enroll in counselor education doctoral programs fulltime, due to their financial circumstances or other personal and familial obligations (Cueva, 2013; Goodrich et al., 2011; Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Morris, 2008; Trepal et al., 2014). Goodrich et al. argued that full-time study favors those who are "single, young, and affluent" (p. 193). Programs that provide part-time enrollment may offer greater access to doctoral degrees for working-class African American women students.

Employment Status

Employment status affects the educational experiences (Perna, 2010) and doctoral persistence (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011) of working-class ethnic minority women (Cueva, 2013; Holley & Gardner 2012). Recent research findings identified that some working-class doctoral students work full-time off-campus jobs or multiple off-campus part-time jobs to account for unmet financial needs (Cueva, 2013; Holley & Gardner, 2012). Holly and Gardner (2012) argued that fulltime doctoral programs that require students not to work off campus

provide added complication for economically disadvantaged students and promote classist environments. In a 2012 qualitative study of the socio-cultural influences that affected first-generation doctoral students, Holly and Gardner reported that a working-class doctoral student had to hide her off-campus employment from department faculty. A national case study of 21 self-identified working-class women of color enrolled in Ph.D. programs at PWIs produced similar findings (Cueva, 2013). Cueva (2013) found that working-class Chicana and Native American women enrolled in Ph.D. programs had to work fulltime jobs for economic sustainment and experienced a lack of support and understanding from program faculty. Participants reported that they felt as if they could not approach faculty about their financial circumstances and frequently contemplated dropping out because they held a lower economic status than faculty and peers. Holly and Gardner's and Cueva's findings corroborate with the data in Langhout et al.'s (2009) study which found that students from lower social class statuses experience substantial instances of classism in university settings. Cueva and Laughout et al. found that classism is associated with lower levels of belongingness, negative psychosocial outcomes, and greater intentions of stopping or dropping out.

Overall, researchers have identified that full-time, off-campus employment may negatively influence the doctoral education experiences of working-class ethnic minority women students (Cueva, 2013). However, a few research studies demonstrated how off-campus employment may enhance educational experiences, particularly for students in counselor education doctoral programs. Pate (1990) reported that counselor education doctoral programs have traditionally been designed for individuals who have significant professional experience. Furthermore, select counselor education doctoral programs have required professional counseling experience for admission (Pate, 1990).

An illustration of the benefits of maintaining off-campus employment while pursuing doctoral study is found in Willis and Carmichael's (2011) qualitative study on the lived experiences of counselor education doctoral students. The study's sample was composed of four White females and two White males who were enrolled in counselor education programs from the 1970s – 1990s. Data from the study indicated that students took refuge in their professional careers off-campus when they experienced adversity in their doctoral programs. Students reported that their professional careers provided them a sense of power and belonging that they did not receive in their doctoral programs.

Willis and Carmichael (2011) demonstrated that off-campus employment is not necessarily a detriment to educational success for counselor education doctoral students. However, due to the lack of sufficient ethnic minority representation in the sample, the findings in this study are limited in their applicability. Henfield et al. (2013) found that African American students in counselor education doctoral programs faced heightened circumstances of isolation and disrespectful classroom exchanges. The adverse experiences fostered feelings of disconnection and decreased African American students' sense of belonging in their respective counselor education doctoral programs (Henfield et al., 2013). Due to the underrepresentation of ethnic minority students in Willis and Carmichael's study, there is limited data that details how employed African American women students can use their professional careers as place of refuge. Furthermore, Henfield et al.'s study focused solely on racialized experiences. The study did not capture how classism and sexism may also have influenced the doctoral education experiences of African American women counselor education students at PWIs.

To review, researchers have suggested that African American women doctoral students from working-class backgrounds may experience doctoral education differently due to unmet

financial needs, enrollment status, and employment status. While working-class students may face additional challenges, researchers provided data related to how working-class students mitigated challenges in order to persist in doctoral study. The next section of the literature review provides information regarding the various forms of capital working-class ethnic minority women utilize as they pursue doctoral education at PWIs.

The Utilization of Multiple Forms of Capital

Dominant Capital

Studies related to social class and educational inequity typically reference French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's scholarship to elucidate the importance of working-class students' possession of various forms of capital (Hurst, 2013; Jones & Vagle, 2013; Langhout et al., 2009; Richardson et al., 2004; Walpole, 2003). Bourdieu (1986) proposed that there are three primary forms of capital that influence success in educational environments: economic, social, and cultural capital. Economic (or financial) capital refers to material capital that can be directly converted into money. Social capital is a non-economic capital that refers to an individual's membership in or access to high-status social networks that can provide access to other forms of capital. Cultural capital refers to varied experiences and a broad range of knowledge about the world. Adams et al. (2013) further described cultural capital as the possession of a certain style of speech, dress, physical appearance, or knowledge related to arts, literature, and music.

Capital is transmitted from parents to children through direct physical exchange (economic capital) or through indirect means such attitudes, preferences, and sharing knowledge (Bourdieu, 1986; Hurst, 2013). Bourdieu (1986) asserted that all members of society do not equally possess these three forms of capital and that the possession of capital plays a key role in socioeconomic mobility and educational success (e.g., access to advanced education, higher-

salary, and higher-status job) (Bourdieu, 1986). Furthermore, Bourdieu argued that educational institutions support the reproduction of a stratified class system by reinforcing the cultural and social capital of dominant groups (e.g., White, middle-upper class, college educated men) who hold more power (Hurst, 2013).

Followers of the Bourdieusian framework typically espouse that working-class students and their families (a) have limited knowledge and understanding of how to succeed in educational institutions, (b) possess few skills and strategies for navigating educational institutions, and (c) have insufficient social connections in order to ascertain needed resources that will lead to academic achievement (Hurst, 2013; Richardson et al., 2004). Scholars who support the Bourdieusian framework have suggested that working-class women doctoral students do not have access to the same types of knowledge and skills as their middle and upper-class peers (Richardson et al., 2004). In essence, Bourdieu and scholars who support his work maintain that students from working-class backgrounds will have greater difficulty navigating higher education if they do not acquire the same forms of capital held by dominant or more privileged groups (Carter, 2003; Yosso, 2005).

Non-Dominant Capital

Bourdieu's work is widely cited in the literature related to working-class students and higher education (Langhout et al., 2009; Richardson et al., 2004; Rubin et al., 2014; Walpole 2003, 2007). Nonetheless, there is considerable debate concerning the applicability of Bourdieu's framework in relation to the study of working-class African American college students. Scholars such as Prudence Carter (2003), Tara Yosso (2005) and Marybeth Walpole (2007) have presented legitimate critiques of Bourdieu's framework. Scholars argued that there is an ethnocentric bias in Bourdieu's conventional use of cultural and social capital (Carter,

2003; Walpole, 2007; Yosso, 2005). Accordingly, scholars proposed that the Bourdieusian lens privileges the capital possessed by dominant groups over the capital possessed by non-dominant groups (e.g., historically marginalized) (Carter, 2003; Walpole, 2007; Yosso, 2005). Carter (2003) asserted that Bourdieu's value of cultural and social capital is predicated on the experiences of the dominant social class and race. Walpole (2007) highlighted that Bourdieu's work is grounded in the French social structure and does not account for the demographic diversity and social structures in the U.S., which are complicated by class, race, and gender statuses.

The sole use of the Bourdieusian lens in the current study regarding working-class African American women students would risk devaluing or ignoring the cultural resources possessed by economically disadvantaged African American women. Walpole (2007) stated that "finding ways to account for the complexities of students' lived experiences should involve learning from and perhaps combining new conceptual models" (p. 67). The cultural resources possessed by economically disadvantaged African American women can also be converted into valuable forms of capital in order to aid in navigating doctoral education (Carter, 2003; Morris, 2008; Robinson-Wood, 2009; Yosso, 2005).

In an effort to identify the forms of capital used by economically disadvantaged African American students, Carter (2003) conducted a qualitative study to investigate how 44 low-income African American students successfully navigated educational settings with multiple minority statuses. Carter found that economically disadvantaged African American students utilized the Bourdieusian forms of capital (i.e., dominant form); however, the students also referenced using various *non-dominant* forms of capital to navigate chilly academic environments. Carter, Yosso (2005) and Robinson-Wood (2009) contended that the traditional

view of capital is narrowly defined and ethnic minority groups utilize both dominant and non-dominant forms of capital to gain upward socioeconomic mobility via education.

Yosso (2005) explicated six forms of non-dominant capital historically marginalized groups use to attain academic success and socioeconomic mobility. Grounded in past research conducted on economically disadvantaged African Americans, Chicanas, and other ethnic minority groups, Yosso identified non-dominant forms of capital as (a) aspirational capital, (b) linguistic capital, (c) familial capital, (d) social capital, (e) navigational capital, and (f) resistant capital. *Aspirational capital* refers to the ability to persevere and maintain resiliency even when confronted with real or perceived barriers. Resiliency can be defined as the capacity to withstand significant challenges that threaten stability, viability, or development (Liu & Allmon, 2014; Masten, 2011). *Linguistic capital* refers to the intellectual and social skills attained through communicative experiences in more than one language or style of speech. Linguistic capital values students' ability to communicate to friends and family using a unique dialect, in addition to possessing the ability to speak the standard form of English required in formal educational settings (Barratt, 2011; Yosso, 2005). Some researchers refer to this process as code switching (Barratt, 2011). *Familial capital* refers to cultural knowledge and experiences that carry a sense of community, values history, and acknowledges cultural intuition. Familial capital represents valuing the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to the family system which can help students cope with emotionally or psychologically distressing situations that may foster isolation.

Social capital is understood as networks of peers and other social contacts that provide instrumental and emotional support to help students navigate societal institutions. *Navigational capital* refers to the ability to maneuver through social and educational institutions that were not traditionally designated for people of color. Yosso proposed that an example of navigational

capital is the ability of students of color to utilize strategies that enable them to academically thrive in hostile university settings, despite the presence of distressing conditions that place them at risk of dropping out. Last, Yosso asserted that *resistant capital* refers to the knowledge and advocacy skills people use to challenge inequality. Barratt (2011) also identified *spiritual capital,* which represents the possession of valued knowledge related to spirituality, morality, values, and ethics.

In summary, researchers have explicated non-dominant forms of capital that may help working-class and ethnic minority students successfully navigate higher education (Barratt, 2011; Carter, 2003; Yosso, 2005). Literature related to African American women students' educational experiences tends to disregard the use of non-dominant capital (Carter, 2003; Louque & Garcia, 2000; Robinson-Wood, 2009; Yosso, 2005). Recognizing various forms of capital may lead to a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of working-class African American women in doctoral education.

Honoring Non-Dominant Capital and Challenging Deficit Ideology

Carter (2003) asserted that researchers have failed to raise a critical awareness of the value of non-dominant cultural resources within low-income African American communities. Researchers have often utilized a deficit approach to frame the educational experiences of African American women students (Collins, 2009; Louque & Garcia, 2000; Pollard & Welch, 2006; Strayhorn, 2013). As a result, researchers studying African American women students have primarily focused on their lack of dominant capital, negative academic experiences, and barriers to success (Pollard & Welch, 2006; Sule, 2009). Deficit theorizing purposes that (a) ethnic minority students are at fault for issues related to poor educational attainment; (b) students enter schools without the dominant forms of capital; (c) parents or other family members do not

value or support educational endeavors; and (d) the cultural background, home environment, beliefs, and value systems of ethnic minority students are substandard (Louque & Garcia, 2000; Yosso, 2005). The use of a deficit approach weakens the researchers' ability to identify the strengths and positive academic experiences of African American women doctoral students (Louque & Garcia, 2000; Sule, 2009).

To summarize, studies have shown that researchers must attend to the function and value of both dominant and non-dominant forms of capital and how both may serve to support educational success. By taking into account the utilization of various forms of capital, researchers may be able to develop a more complete and nuanced understanding of the resilience strategies used by all students, including working-class African American women. As I have previously stated and demonstrated, researchers have yielded a litany of reasons for educational failure but have produced fewer insights into what factors promote educational success (Jones, 2003; Louque & Garcia, 2000; Sule, 2009). Although the obstacles that African American women encounter in doctoral level education are significant, the current study is designed to examine positive educational experiences and identify factors that promote doctoral persistence. To best accomplish this goal, the next section will review studies regarding various factors that have been shown to support doctoral persistence.

Factors that Support Doctoral Persistence

Researchers have identified that doctoral persistence is not the result of one single factor (Bair, 1999; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Instead, studies have shown that doctoral persistence is influenced by an interaction of multiple factors generally categorized as personal factors (i.e., student related factors) or institutional factors (Ivankova & Stick, 2007; Morris, 2008; Spaulding & Rockinson-

Szapkiw, 2012; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Researchers have suggested that both personal and institutional factors may contribute to the positive educational experiences of African American women and working-class students in doctoral education (Jones, 2003; Morris, 2008; Sule, 2009).

Personal Factors

Parental Status. Researchers have indicated that parental status influences the educational experiences of women of color doctoral students in counselor education programs (Trepal et al., 2013). Trepal et al. (2013) conducted a phenomenological study to gain insight into the educational experiences of counselor education doctoral student mothers (i.e., eight White, one Asian, one Latina) from diverse backgrounds. Trepal et al. found that motherhood led to both negative and positive educational experiences for women in counselor education doctoral programs.

The predominant negative subtheme in Trepal et al.'s (2013) study was the experience of guilt. Participants reported that aspects of doctoral study often competed with the time they spent with their children and they did not feel present as either mothers or doctoral students. An employed doctoral student mother reported that she struggled with "feeling like a bad mom, a horrible employee, and a debilitating student" (Trepal et al., 2013, p. 36). A participant who had multiple academic responsibilities (e.g., course work, attending department meetings) reported that she had to consider the need for extra funds to cover additional childcare expenses. Similar findings were noted in Wasburn-Moses' (2008) quantitative study that surveyed 619 doctoral students across 78 doctoral programs. Wasburn-Moses reported that students did not feel confident in their ability to juggle family and doctoral study.

Whereas some participants in Trepal et al.'s (2013) study reported negative experiences regarding motherhood and doctoral study, other participants reported experiences that were more favorable. A few students reported that their department faculty were welcoming, supportive of bringing children into the classroom when appropriate, and understanding of competing parental responsibilities. Trepal et al. concluded that women counselor education doctoral students received mixed messages about gender roles, motherhood, and completing doctoral study. The researchers suggested that women counselor education doctoral students might deem this intersection as a barrier to doctoral persistence. Findings from Trepal et al.'s study echo those of others (Costes, Helmke, & Ulku-Steiner, 2006) regarding the influences of traditional gender roles in doctoral education, particularly for racial/ethnic minority women (Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Turner & Thompson, 1993).

Trepal et al.'s (2013) study provides insight into the experiences of women students in counselor education doctoral programs. However, the omission of African American women in the sample limits the study's efficacy toward understanding how parental status might affect the educational experiences of African American women. In addition to balancing potential family responsibilities and finances, working-class African American women doctoral students may encounter additional circumstances of racism, gender-stereotyping, and classism in university settings (Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Jones, 2003; Morris, 2008). The additional forms of oppression may differentially influence their involvement and sense of belonging within the academic and social subsystems of their departments (Felder et al., 2014; Morris, 2008).

Personal experiences. Literature reflecting the broad experiences of African American doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs documented that students experience disrespectful classroom exchanges, peer disconnection, and lack of cultural understanding

(Henfield et al., 2011; Henfield et al., 2013). Gildersleeve et al. (2011) reported that tentativeness, insecurity, and doubt are often projected onto African American doctoral students at PWIs. Researchers suggested that adverse academic experiences often beget self-censorship which emerges as a consequence of underrepresented students constantly having to negotiate when and how to respond to discrimination and prejudice (Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Richardson et al., 2004; Rodriguez, 2006). Rodriquez's (2006) narrative inquiry that examined African American women experiences in doctoral education at PWIs identified that African American women often responded to incessant prejudicial occurrences by "saying as little as possible" and "silencing their voices" (p. 1081). hooks (2000) emphasized that African American women have cultural strengths that supports the resistance of marginal experiences at PWIs.

Coming to Voice. Although doctoral education at PWIs may play a critical role in reproducing class stratification, it also provides opportunities to confront classist, racist, and sexist practices (hooks, 1989, 2000; Jones, 2003). hooks (1989) identified *coming to voice* as moving from silence to speech in order to resist marginalization in academic settings (Rodriguez, 2006). Bryant et al. (2005) asserted that African American women in counselor education must use their voice to challenge stereotypes and myths through leadership, theory development, and research. Researchers have emphasized that African American women doctoral students have the scholarly credibility to produce knowledge that will help others in understanding the value of African American culture and will promote visibility in the literature and in classrooms on predominantly White university campuses (Bryant et al. 2004; Collins, 1986; Lewis et al., 2004).

Likewise, Richardson et al. (2004) suggested that women researchers from working-class backgrounds have the potential to bring unique perspectives and deeper understandings of the working-class culture into educational settings. Jones (2004) asserted that doctoral study

provides a social context for developing an identity as a working-class intellectual woman. Jones further suggested that working-class African American women can connect with like-minded people and use their voice to advocate for the needs of economically disadvantaged groups. In sum, scholars have emphasized that despite multiple minority statuses and experiences of marginalization in doctoral education at PWIs, working-class African American women should not consider their situation as one of deprivation. Instead, hooks and other scholars suggested that working-class African American women doctoral students should use their marginalized voices to promote "radical openness and possibility" (hooks, 1990, p. 153).

   Ownership of dissertation topic. Students' ownership of their dissertation topic is integral to doctoral persistence (Earl-Novell, 2006; Flynn, Chasek, Harper, Murphy, & Jorgensen, 2012; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Students of color and working-class doctoral students seek coherence in their research topics and cultural identity (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Gonzalez, 2006; Howley, Middleton, Howley, Williams, & Pressley, 2013; Jones, 2004; Richardson et al., 2004; Rodriguez, 2006). Research studies have shown that African Americans and other doctoral students of color were discouraged from using culturally appropriate epistemologies and theoretical frameworks in their research (Gonzalez, 2006; Rodriguez, 2006; Sule, 2009). The scholarly endeavors of African American women are sometimes stifled when their research is related to communities of color (Felder et al., 2014; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Gonzalez, 2006; Rodriguez, 2006). Rodriguez (2006) reported that "brown on brown" research is not valued whereas research regarding Eurocentric issues is considered as legitimate (p. 1078). Prejudicial practices may place an undue burden on students to either divest their academic interests or become the sole ambassador of research and scholarship related to communities of color (Felder et al., 2014; Gildersleeve et al., 2011). Jones (2004) and others (Richardson et al.,

2004; Rodriguez, 2006) found that a connection between academic literature and personal histories enabled working-class ethnic minority women to connect with their intellectual work and find a sense of belonging in predominantly White doctoral programs. Complementary to these studies, Flynn et al.'s (2012) qualitative inquiry of the dissertation process in counselor education doctoral programs found that students completed their dissertations more in a more timely manner when dissertation chairs authentically supported students' natural research interests.

   Personal and Professional Motivation. Hoskins and Goldberg (2005) conducted a qualitative study to understand what factors influenced doctoral student persistence for 33 students in CACREP-accredited counselor education doctoral programs. The researchers found that students who were personally and professionally motivated were more likely to persist. Personal motivation was associated with achievement, power, self-fulfillment, and identity. Professional motivation was related to acquiring the desired job, enhanced marketability, and credibility. Hoskins and Goldberg's sample contained predominantly White women ($n = 28$); however, research conducted on African American women doctoral students (Sule, 2009) and working-class women doctoral students in other academic disciplines contained similar findings (Jones, 2003, 2004). Sule's (2009) study of the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in education at PWIs found that the students had to remain personally motivated to persevere in the face of marginalization. Sule reported that participants expressed the belief that they could overcome academic and social challenges through hard work and faith. For example, participants made statements such as "if a road is blocked you need to go around it, take it from a different perspective" and "there is always some road or window or something

that's going to open" (p. 156). Such responses illustrate the women's use of aspirational and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to remain motivated toward doctoral persistence.

Findings from other studies demonstrated that working-class African American women and women from working-class backgrounds were personally motivated to complete doctoral study in order to mentor other working-class students and contribute to the socioeconomic prosperity of their families (Gasman, Hirschfield, Vultaggio, 2008; Jones, 2004; Richardson et al., 2004). Researchers suggested that giving back to others is often considered more important than self-fulfillment or attaining high-status professional positions for African American students and women students from working-class backgrounds (Cueva, 2013; Gasman et al., 2008; Richardson et al., 2004). Liu and Allmon (2014) asserted that individuals from lower class backgrounds exhibit more helping behavior even when their actions are not advantageous to their own wellness and advancement. Knowles and Bryant (2011) affirmed that African American women in counseling fields are socially prescribed the cultural ethos of caring that add additional expectations to professional and educational roles. The intersection of race, gender, social class, and field of study seemingly influence the personal and professional motivations of working-class African American women students in counselor education doctoral programs.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is associated with doctoral persistence (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Harsch, 2008; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as a person's judgments of their capabilities to organize and perform actions required to attain designated outcomes. Self-efficacy influences a student's motivation, expectations, perceptions of abilities, and commitment to action (Harsch, 2008). In a quantitative study surveying 243 doctoral students in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs nationwide, Harsch (2008) found that self-efficacy was statistically significant in explaining the

length of time to degree completion. While Harsch's study identified that self-efficacy has a

significant influence on doctoral persistence for counselor education students, the study did not

focus on how self-efficacy developed or what situations evoked or did not evoke self-efficacy.

Qualitative studies regarding the educational experiences of working-class women

doctoral students of color in other academic disciplines have identified various aspects and

characteristics of self-efficacy that are specific to students in this subgroup (Cueva, 2013; Sule,

2009). Studies have identified that the self-efficacy that working-class women doctoral students

of color use to persist in doctoral study is often derived from precollege experiences and positive

academic experiences (Cueva, 2013; Jones, 2004; Gonzalez, 2006; Sule, 2009).

Precollege Experiences. Students enter doctoral programs with a variety of family,

socioeconomic, and educational influences that shape their expectations and attitudes toward

doctoral persistence (Holley & Gardner 2012; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

Working-class women of color students reported that observing their parents work labor-

intensive jobs instilled valuable work ethic that contributed to the development of self-efficacy

(Jones, 2004). Researchers suggested that working-class students of color have an expectation of

hard work that is unaccompanied by a sense of entitlement (Gandara, 1982; Richardson et al.,

2004). In accordance, Jones (2004) asserted that because working-class women students have

navigated educational systems with limited academic resources, they may have more confidence

in their intellectual ability and merit in doctoral level education.

In spite of the ingrained work-ethic and self-efficacy, working-class women of color

students have described an awareness of the myth of meritocracy, in which industrious

productivity does not always result in equitable outcomes for students of color (Adams et al.,

2013; Jones, 2003). Findings from the research illustrated that self-efficacy influences doctoral

persistence for working-class African American women; yet, access to privileged networks or dominant forms of capital (e.g., Bourdieu's social capital) is often necessary.

Positive Academic Experiences. Achieving academic success prior to doctoral study contributes to the development of academic self-efficacy (Gonzalez, 2006; Louque & Garcia, 2000; Sule, 2009). Academic self-efficacy refers to having confidence in the capability to perform a specific academic task (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Harsch, 2008). Studies have indicated that positive educational experiences in secondary education, undergraduate, and master's level programs helped students develop confidence in their ability to succeed in doctoral level education (Gonzalez, 2006; Louque & Garcia, 2000; Sule, 2009). In addition, African American women students reported culturally specific characteristics that evoked academic self-efficacy, such as having a sense of duty to speak on African American experiences and the use of oral traditions in the classroom (Louque & Garcia, 2000; Sule, 2009).

Sule (2009) reported that African American women doctoral students' academic self-efficacy was also influenced by modeling Black women leaders (typically mothers or mother figures) who were hardworking, assertive, determined, caring, and reliable. Students' perceptions regarding factors that helped to develop their self-efficacy support the notion that African American women have unique cultural resources and capital that should be valued rather than viewed as deficits (Louque & Garcia, 2000; Yosso, 2005).

Coping skills. The ability to effectively cope with and manage stress is associated with doctoral persistence (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Studies have shown that doctoral students face increased demands on their time, endurance, and energy due to conducting research, teaching, preparing for or taking comprehensive examinations, publishing, maintaining or finding employment, managing finances, and upholding caretaking responsibilities (Grady,

Touche, Oslawski-Lopez, Powers & Simacek, 2014; Kaufman, 2006; Trepal et al., 2013).

Consequently, researchers specified that doctoral students typically experience increased stress

as a result of the demands and expectations inherent in doctoral study (Kaufman, 2006; Toews,

Lockyer, Dobson, & Brownell, 1993).

An examination of effective coping skills used by working-class African American

women doctoral students in counselor education is especially important. Knowles and Bryant

(2011) argued that personal and cultural expectations demand displays of strength that place

added stress on African American women in the field of counseling. Moreover, Roach & Young

(2007) suggested that counselor education doctoral students are often reluctant to admit that they

have a problem and often do not seek help to address their issues.

Studies have shown that working-class and African American women doctoral students

use various forms of social and cultural capital to cope with stress related to doctoral education.

The use of personal support systems is widely cited as a means that working-class and African

American women doctoral students use to manage stress (Cueva, 2013; Henfield et al., 2011;

Louque & Garcia, 2000; Rodriguez, 2006; Sule, 2009). Henfield et al. (2011) identified that

African American students in counselor education doctoral programs used raced-based

organizations and advanced peers as a means to cope in adverse academic settings. Cueva

(2013) reported that working-class women of color doctoral students created counter-spaces or

communities of support outside of their department. Other studies specified that African

American women utilize family members and faculty of color as part of their personal support

system (Louque & Garcia, 2000; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Johnson-Bailey et al. (2008)

identified that African American women students also use religion and spirituality as a means to

cope with stressors in graduate education. Overall, researchers have indicated that working-class

and African American women doctoral students use a plethora of coping skills to effectively manage stress while in graduate education.

To review, researchers have suggested that personal factors such as parental status, using one's voices to resist marginalization, motivation, self-efficacy, and coping skills may largely influence doctoral persistence. This data is useful in helping to create a context for understanding of the doctoral education experiences of working-class African American women students in counselor education. Combined with personal factors, institutional factors (e.g., institution type, program, structure, faculty, and curriculum) also play a vital role in the doctoral persistence of African American women students at PWIs (Felder et al., 2014; Grant, 2012; Morris, 2008; Shavers & Moore 2014).

Institutional Factors

Literature has shown that institutional factors have a substantial influence on the doctoral education experiences of African American women students at PWIs (Grant, 2012; Shaver & Moore, 2014). Researchers have primarily highlighted how institutional factors contribute to academic and social difficulties for African American women students at PWIs (Lewis et al., 2004; Rodriguez, 2006; Shaver & Moore, 2014). Major findings from these studies indicate that African American women doctoral students experience feelings of isolation, have limited role models and mentors, lack culturally relevant curricula, and are uncertain of how to navigate doctoral education at PWIs (Grant, 2012; Lewis et al., 2004; Shaver & Moore, 2014).

The Culture of Doctoral Education at PWIs. The culture of doctoral education at PWIs has been designated as a predominantly White environment that disseminates White middle-classed values (Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Jones, 2004). Doctoral education encompasses a socialization process in which doctoral students "learn encoded systems of behavior specific to

their area of expertise and the system of meanings and values attached to these behaviors"

(Taylor & Antony, 2000, p. 186). Scholars have argued that the socialization process in doctoral

education at PWIs is predicated on the practices and values of White, middle class males since

this group has historically populated doctoral level education; as a result, the values and beliefs

of marginalized groups are often inconsistent with the cultural norms prescribed in doctoral

education at PWIs (Felder et al., 2014; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Jones, 2004).

  Protivnak & Foss (2009) conducted a qualitative study to explore themes that influenced

the experiences of 141 counselor education doctoral students enrolled in CACREP-accredited

programs nationwide. The researchers found that the culture in select counselor education

programs hindered doctoral persistence. Students from the study reported that they were

indoctrinated into a philosophy that was not their own and they had to "fake it to make it" in

their program (Protivnak & Foss, 2009, p. 245). Protivnak & Foss stated that several participants

reported that they had to comprise their own values to assimilate within the department culture.

Counselor education doctoral students in Protivnak and Foss' study reported that negative

department cultures challenged their authenticity, integrity, and stifled their ability to develop

their unique scholar identity.

  The conformist nature of doctoral education may exacerbate the elusiveness of self-

identity and sense of belongingness for working-class ethnic minority women doctoral students

(Jones, 2004; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). Jones (2004) asserted that working-class ethnic minority

women may feel pressure to isolate from their families or culture to assimilate to the culture of

doctoral education. Jones asserted that assimilating to the culture of doctoral education at PWIs

is potentially stressful for working-class women doctoral students because they may perceive

themselves as no longer fitting in with their working-class family and friends, nor do they feel a sense of belonging in the privileged setting of the program.

Resilience Strategies and Additional Factors that Support Doctoral Persistence

      Shifting. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) used the term *shifting* to identify ways African American women have had to change their values, behaviors, attitudes, or overall self-presentation to assimilate to the broader societal codes of race, gender, and class. Researchers identified that working-class African American women may use shifting as a means to persist in doctoral education at PWIs (Hinton, 2010; Jones, 2003, 2004; Morris, 2008; Rodriguez, 2006; Shavers & Moore, 2014). Shavers and Moore (2014) conducted a qualitative investigation to gain an understanding of how 15 African American female doctoral students at PWIs overcame various obstacles in order to academically persist and maintain their well-being. Findings from the study indicated that all of the women reported instances in which they used some form of shifting in an effort to successfully navigate doctoral education. For instance, participants reported shifting to present themselves with an academic disposition of skills and competence at all times in order to negate stereotypical perceptions based on their race, gender, or Afrocentric appearance. Other participants reported that they shifted into "super student" roles by overextending themselves and becoming immersed in various academic activities in an effort to appear competent and negate stereotypes of incompetence (p. 397).

      All of the African American women doctoral students in Shavers and Moore's (2014) study reported that they felt it necessary to present themselves in a professional manner at all times. Participants reported that they constantly monitored their grammar, interactions, and outward appearance due to a heighted awareness of stereotypes and felt a need to control how faculty and peers perceived them. Largely, participants in Shavers and Moore's study reported

that hiding their true selves and assimilating to the culture of doctoral education helped them to successfully navigate doctoral study at PWIs.

While most students reported that shifting aided doctoral persistence, some students reported that hiding their true selves was detrimental to their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Participants reported that shifting forced them to mask their vulnerabilities and led to self-censorship. Participants stated that the desire to appear as super competent decreased their likelihood of building genuine and supportive relationships with doctoral advisors, peers, and department faculty. Thus, some participants reported that shifting resulted in feeling disconnected, incomplete, and exhausted. Although majority of the women in Shavers and Moore's (2014) study identified shifting as a beneficial navigational strategy, findings from other studies suggested that shifting creates isolation that leads African American women doctoral students to disconnect from potential support systems (Hinton, 2010; Morris, 2008). Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) cautioned that African American women could "shift too far" and resultantly have to hide their true self or sacrifice their own beliefs in order to thrive in certain settings (p.172).

Connections. Hoskins and Goldberg (2005) coined the term *connection* to represent the establishment of a quality relationship between doctoral students and faculty or fellow students. Counselor education doctoral students in Hoskins and Goldberg's study described that having a connection with faculty and peers was essential to their ability to persist in doctoral study. Henfield et al. (2011) identified that connections were essential for African American women and men students in counselor education doctoral programs, as they are likely to experience varied forms of marginalization. African American students in Henfield et al.'s study described how they relied on doctoral advisors for traditional guidance related to academic and

professional affairs, but also used advisors as a means for personal support and affirmation. A few students in Henfield et al.'s study stated that they felt safe to express their needs and vulnerabilities to doctoral advisors; hence, they did not report the need to shift.

Establishing connections with doctoral advisors may be important for working-class African American women students' doctoral persistence, as researchers have shown how working-class students often feel isolated and are unaware of how to navigate doctoral study (Jones, 2003, 2004). Lovitts (2001) suggested that doctoral advisors could better serve underrepresented students by helping them develop cognitive maps to gain deeper insight into the formal and informal structures and interactions within graduate education. Flynn et al. (2012) identified that counselor education doctoral advisors play a pivotal in the progression of advisees when they are active and engaged with students throughout their doctoral process.

Peer connections. Researchers have identified that peer connections support the positive educational experiences of African American women graduate students in counselor education programs at PWIs (Haskins et al., 2013; Henfield et al., 2011). Henfield et al.'s (2011) qualitative study of 11 African American counselor education doctoral students found that students used more experienced African American students and race-based student organizations as a means of support at PWIs. Participants reported that advanced students in counselor education shared advice and personal experiences, which helped them to transition through the stages of doctoral study.

Henfield et al. (2011) also reported that affiliations with campus race-based organizations such as Black Greek fraternities and sororities and Black student associations helped African American counselor education students to navigate doctoral study. The researchers asserted that involvement with race-based organizations was especially important when there were no other

students of color in the doctoral program. Research conducted by Robertson & Mason (2008) validate findings that involvement in race-based organizations supports positive social and academic integration of African American doctoral students

Henfield et al.'s (2011) and Robertson and Mason's (2008) studies provided valuable information related to how African American students use peer connections to find support within their program or institution. Supportive peer networks help to combat the isolation and alienation that African American students often experience at PWIs (Haskins et al., 2013; Morris, 2008, Shavers & Moore, 2014). However, Henfield et al.'s study, like many others conducted on African American doctoral students (Felder et al., 2014; Morris, 2008; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Sule, 2009), restricts the focus to examining either race or gender related experiences and do not capture the nuances of social class status. Jones (2003) found that working-class African American women doctoral students at PWIs find it difficult to establish peer connections with other African American peers due to cultural differences between affluent (e.g., middle-upper class) and working-class African Americans. Despite the commonalities among African American women, social class status provides a different context for understanding the educational experiences of these women (Collins, 2009; hooks, 2000). Working-class African American women doctoral students may have differential engagement in the academic and social subsystems of the institution. Therefore, until a study is conducted to capture their lived experiences, we can only speculate that working-class African American women benefit equally from race-based peer connections.

Mentoring. Mentoring relationships promote positive educational experiences and academic success for African American women doctoral students at PWIs (Grant, 2012; Grant and Simmons, 2008; Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Mentoring is positively associated to several

student outcomes including improving retention (Pope, 2002), self-determination (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Sedlacek, Benjamin, Schlosser, & Sheu, 2008), resiliency (Grant, 2012; Grant & Simmons, 2008), and understanding and dealing with racism on campus (Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Scholars have specifically suggested that within-group (i.e., same race and gender) and culturally responsive mentoring are beneficial for African American women in doctoral education at PWIs (Collins, Kamya, & Tourse, 1997; Grant, 2012; Hinton, 2010; Lindsay-Dennis et al., 2011; Thomas & Hollenshead 2001). Grant (2012) used narrative inquiry to explore the specific mentoring experiences of African American women doctoral students in educational leadership programs at PWIs. Grant's research findings illustrated that within-group mentorships (a) contributed to richer educational experiences, (b) helped students to overcome barriers unique to African American women, and (c) helped students to understand and explore their multiple identities. Grant emphasized that within group mentorships helped African American women doctoral students to develop a greater level of identity consciousness and empowered students to confront systemic oppression at PWIs.

While researchers have provided evidence that within-group mentoring promotes positive educational experiences for African American women doctoral students, there are not enough African American women faculty at PWIs to match the influx of African American women student enrollment (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Peer mentorships, cross-cultural mentorships, and cross gender mentors are also effective in guiding African American women doctoral students through academia (Costes et al., 2006; Grant, 2012; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2008). Costes et al. (2006) found that the mentor's gender and race were not the most significant factors in influencing the doctoral persistence for female doctoral students. Rather, female doctoral students reported that the overall supportiveness of the mentor helped them to balance

their personal and professional lives that supported progression in doctoral study (Costes et al., 2006).

  Culturally Relevant Curriculum. Working-class and African American students have reported experiencing an overexposure to dominant Eurocentric curriculum in doctoral programs at PWIs (Gonzalez, 2006; Jones, 2003; Lewis et al., 2004). Researchers have identified similar reports in CACREP-accredited counseling education graduate programs at PWIs (Haskins et al., 2013). Findings from Haskins et al.'s (2013) phenomenological inquiry of the experiences of African American graduate students, the majority of whom were female, in CACREP-accredited counseling education programs found that students experienced a lack of course content that related to the experiences of African Americans. Study participants stated that they felt "overlooked, unimportant, or forgotten in the curriculum" (Haskins et al., 2013, p. 170). Such findings are concerning because CACREP-accredited counselor education programs are designed to ensure that students and future counselors demonstrate knowledge of and training in social and cultural diversity (CACREP Standards 2009, Section 2. G. 2). Corresponding to Haskins et al.'s findings, Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey (2010) reported that much of the curriculum used at PWIs privileges the knowledge of Whites and has marginalized the contributions and representations of people of color. Although Haskins et al.'s study was conducted on master's level students, the study provided valuable information that sheds light on how the counselor education curriculum at PWIs influences the academic experiences of African American students.

  A culturally relevant curriculum may have important influences on the academic success of working-class African American women doctoral students. Researchers have found that African American students are more interested and engaged in class when the course content is

reflective of their experiences (Roberston & Mason 2008; Thompson & Louque, 2005).

Likewise, Jones (2004) asserted that course content that addresses social class stratification and the ways in which social class influences students' subjectivities and social interactions is important in affirming class diversity for working-class students (p. 89). In summary, culturally diverse curricula helps to establish connections between academic literature and personal histories that may permit working-class African American women the opportunity to connect with intellectual work and find a sense of belonging in doctoral education at PWIs (Jones, 2004).

Diverse Faculty. Literature has shown that diversification of program faculty (e.g., class, race, gender, sexual orientation, geographic origin) is important to the doctoral education experiences of students (Gonzalez, 2006; Richardson et al., 2004). Diverse faculty members typically expose students to diverse curriculum (Espino, 2012; Gonzalez, 2006; Richardson et al., 2004; Robertson & Mason, 2008). Diverse faculty also provide proactive support (Haskins et al., 2013). For instance, Haskins et al. (2013) found that faculty of color provided academic and personal support to African American counselor education graduate students without prompting from the students. Proactive support from faculty of color is especially pertinent for African American women doctoral students at PWIs, as researchers have shown that their use of shifting may hinder their willingness to seek assistance when needed (Shavers & Moore, 2014).

Faculty with various minorities statuses are more likely to broach issues that are pertinent to students' academic and social experiences at PWIs, such as topics related to racism, classism, and discrimination (Bush & Bush 2010; Robertson & Mason, 2008; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Moreover, minority faculty are likely to infuse this information into classroom assignments and curricula (Bush & Bush 2010; Robertson & Mason, 2008; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Although faculty members may represent different minority groups, researchers

asserted that minority faculty understand the "minority plight," which helps to validate students'

experiences (Haskins et al., 2013, p. 170). An understanding of and sensitivity toward the

experiences of working-class African American women students are essential due to the fact that

working-class students and students of color at PWIs report frequent disrespectful interactions

peers and faculty (Cueva, 2013; Henfield et al., 2013; Morris, 2008; Roberston & Mason, 2008;

Shavers & Moore, 2014).

Flexibility. Counselor education doctoral programs that allow flexible class schedules

and various course delivery modalities (e.g., hybrid, online) may promote the persistence of

working-class African American women students (Flynn et al., 2012; Protivnak & Foss, 2009).

Literature has shown that working-class women students are unlikely to enroll in Ph.D. programs

full-time and are inclined to have various external commitments that may interfere with their

ability to attend traditional face-to-face classes (Morris, 2008). Goodrich et al. (2011) advanced

that counselor education programs that allow for flexibility increase students' participation in

doctoral level education.

In final review, existing empirical studies have helped to increase the understanding of

how African American women and working-class students adapt to the culture of doctoral

education at PWIs. However, there are several voids in the research. Researchers have primarily

focused on the effect that race and gender has on the doctoral education experiences of African

American women students at PWIs. As discussed previously, social class status has not been the

primary focus of these studies. hooks (2000) stated, "it's fashionable to talk about race or

gender, the uncool subject is class" (p. 1). Data related to how a working-class social class

influences the doctoral education experiences of African American women is limited, along with

the strategies that African American women use to transcend classism at PWIs. Black feminist

thought calls for increased analysis of the significance of interlocking systems of class, race, and gender and how each identity influences the experiences of African American women in educational settings (Collins, 2009; hooks, 2000).

Equally concerning, much of the data related to the doctoral experiences of African American women students at PWIs continue to highlight their negative or marginal experiences. Research related to positive experiences and how African American women students continue to thrive in the midst of marginalization is insufficient. Last, Hazler and Carney (1993) recommended that researchers in the field of counselor education study the training of counselor educators. A review of the literature revealed that little research has been conducted on the experiences of counselor education doctoral students, particularly students who hold multiple minority identity statuses.

Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed illustrated that working-class African American women students have distinct experiences as they navigate doctoral education at PWIs, due to their financial circumstances, enrollment status, and employment status. Studies elucidated how working-class African American women students have utilized both dominant and non-dominant forms of capital to successfully persist in doctoral programs at PWIs. Both personal and institutional factors were found to contribute to the positive educational experiences of working-class African American women doctoral students, which is fundamental to doctoral persistence in counselor education programs at PWIs. Thus far, a review of the literature indicated that a comprehensive study has not been conducted to understand the lived experiences of working-class African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs. Until a comprehensive study is conducted, researchers can only extrapolate findings from other studies

and speculate the relationship of the data to the experiences of working-class African American women students enrolled in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs. The voices and experiences of working-class African American women doctoral students in counselor education have value and deserve a place in the literature.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology that I used to answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of working-class African American women students in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs? The chapter begins with a statement reflecting the phenomenon of interest followed by a rationale for qualitative research. Next, I provide an overview of the phenomenological approach and describe hermeneutic phenomenology. Afterward, I provide a self-reflective positionality statement that describes my relationship with the phenomenon and presumptions regarding the study. I describe the participant selection process and data collection procedure, which entails using a two-phase interview process. I delineate the strategies for trustworthiness and authenticity criteria that I used to ensure the study's quality. Last, I describe the data analysis process.

Statement of the Phenomenon

The phenomenon of interest in this study was the lived experiences of working-class African American women in doctoral level education. Specifically, this study aimed to understand how a working-class status influences the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The current study used qualitative research, which is suitable for examining the lived experiences of individuals within their cultural context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Morrow, 2005). Qualitative research is useful for understanding the specificity of social processes taking

place in diverse groups of people (Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Gonzalez, 2006). The data

collection methods utilized in qualitative inquiry are designed to capture the complexity of the

human experiences and allow for the generation of multiple interpretations and realities, which

are rarely captured in quantitative methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Lincoln & Guba,

1985). Creswell (2003) suggested that qualitative approaches allow for advocacy and

participatory writing where there is a strong personal stimulus to pursue issues that relate to

marginalized people with the intentions of creating a better society. Qualitative research was

appropriate for the current study as this research tradition allowed me to reach an in-depth

understanding of how a working-class status influenced the lived experiences of African

American women in doctoral education.

Phenomenological Approach

A phenomenological approach was used to gain an understanding of the experiences of

working-class African American women doctoral students. Phenomenology has become a

dominant means of methodology in the pursuit of knowledge development in educational

research (Dowling, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological methodology involves gaining

an understanding of a phenomenon as it is lived and experienced by human beings through an in-

depth exploration of how humans exist, act, or are engaged in a phenomenon (Dowling, 2007;

van Manen, 1990).

Martin Heidegger's philosophical view of phenomenology challenged the dominant

positivist views of the origins and nature of truth (Polkinghorne, 1983). Heidegger's ontological

views of phenomenology emphasized gaining an understanding of a phenomenon as it is lived,

experienced, and interpreted by human subjects (Racher & Robinson, 2003). Heidegger

emphasized that a person's background and culture inevitably frames the way that he or she

understands and gives meaning to life experiences (Heidegger, 1962; Laverty, 2003). From Heidegger's viewpoint, all understanding is connected to one's sociocultural history and the interpretation of experiences brings about deeper meanings (Koch, 1995; Laverty, 2003). Epistemologically, Heidegger viewed that knowledge is co-constructed between the knower and the known and both are interactively linked in the creation of meaning and understanding (Laverty, 2003).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hans-Georg Gadamer studied under Heidegger and extended his work by proposing the utilization of hermeneutics as a practical application of research methodology (Gadamer, 2004; Laverty, 2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology is founded on the ontological view that the examination of lived experiences is a jointly interpretive process between the researcher and study participants (Dowling, 2007). Gadamer (2004) believed that understanding is achieved through a hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle refers to a reciprocal activity in which the researcher and participant co-construct meanings and understanding related to the phenomenon of interest (Dowling, 2007; Laverty, 2003).

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach does not divorce the identity of the researcher or the researcher's preconceptions from the study (Finlay, 2014; Gadamer, 2004; Vagle, 2014). Gadamer (2004) suggested that the researcher's preconceptions or *forestructures* are part of the experience that makes in-depth understandings possible. Hermeneutic phenomenology starts with a position that the researcher seeking to understand a phenomenon has a bond to the subject matter (Gadamer, 2004; Laverty, 2003). Rather than bracketing or setting aside assumptions, practitioners of hermeneutic phenomenology incorporate their pre-understandings of the subject matter into the research process (Laverty, 2003).

The use of hermeneutic phenomenology requires the researcher to be aware of his or her own perspectives related to the phenomenon. Dalhberg (2006) recommended the use of bridling as a way to help researchers continually reflect on their pre-understandings and experiences as they engage in phenomenological studies. Bridling is a fluid concept that allows for researchers to remain open about their experiences with the phenomenon throughout the research process, while simultaneously seeking and receiving the phenomenon as it is experienced by participants (Dahlberg, 2006; Vagle, 2014). Vagle (2014) suggested that bridling requires the researcher to be open and humble during the exchange of ideas, which honors participants' voices and perspectives. I kept a bridling journal from the inception through the conclusion of the research process to record my personal thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. I maintained a separate field notebook to provide a detailed account of the research activity.

During the data collection process, I was sensitive to participants' language and mindful of the ways that they described their experiences and meanings of the phenomenon. Practitioners of hermeneutic phenomenology are mindful of the effect that culture and tradition might have on the true examination of a phenomenon (Caelli, 2000; Dowling, 2007; Koch, 1999). By using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, I was able to engage in the hermeneutic circle and co-construct experiences with other similarly situated women. Hermeneutic phenomenology is consistent with the tenets of Black Feminist Thought (BFT) in valuing egalitarian dialogic research practices (Finlay, 2014). Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore the educational experiences of working-class African American women doctoral students, it was my belief that cultural and social contexts create conditions of differential experiences of oppression and privilege. The hermeneutic phenomenological analysis focused on describing participants' lived experiences within the

context of their specific social locations as opposed to the universal meanings of the constructs of class, race, and gender. A hermeneutic phenomenological analysis supports the tenets of the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) and BFT in respecting each person's individual and subjective life experiences and considering how contexts may influence experiences.

Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality and reflexivity involve a critical reflection of how the researcher, participants, and phenomenon of interest interact and influence each other (Finlay, 2014; Laverty, 2003). My lived experiences of navigating through the educational system as an African American female from a working-class family prompted my interest in exploring how students from working-class backgrounds persist in academic environments. Social class differences became more salient as I read and became educated on systemic forms of injustice that serve to maintain the status quo. Like hooks (2000), a fellow academic from the working-class, I strived to use my knowledge, skills, and abilities to continue to liberate myself as well as others.

Access to and understanding of the phenomenon are essential to phenomenological research. Juanita Johnson-Bailey (1999), a prominent African American female scholar, emphasized that a major limitation to her studies on the experiences of African American women in higher education was that social class differences between the researcher and the participants "presented walls in the research process that neither [researcher or participant] peered over or attempted to break through" (p. 666). Unlike race and gender, social class status did not give her and the participants a common ground in understanding experiences (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). Other researchers have echoed this shortcoming when conducting research on social class, particularly with individuals who identify as lower/working class (Liu, 2012; Liu & Ali, 2008).

My assumption was that occupying a similar social class location as the study participants would enable me to truly engage the participants. I anticipated being able to gather rich data related to the influences a working-class social class status has on educational experiences and successful persistence. My assumption was that the secrecy and shame traditionally attached to a lower social class status (Liu & Ali, 2008) that is often noted as a limitation in research (Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Liu, 2012) would not be a limitation in my study. Last, my assumption was that a comparable social class location, along with race and gender commonality, would enhance the rigor of the current study. Because I shared some of the same identities (gender, race, student, class) with the participants, I bridled my personal thoughts. I remained close to the data and if any questions arose, I sought the participant's interpretation (Laverty, 2003). Although I shared some commonalties with the participants, there were stark differences in our experiences that prevented me from over-identifying with the research participants.

My student and professional identity are an important component of my postionality. I am a third year candidate in a CACREP accredited counselor education Ph.D. program with an emphasis on social justice and a licensed professional counselor. Being a Ph.D. student alongside the participants, we shared similar experiences. Yet, my doctoral education experiences are unique and differ vastly from others. My intersections of identities shape my doctoral experiences. I am a Christian, a mother of one male child, heterosexual, married, gainfully employed, able-bodied, and from a rural southern area. My identities shape my personal experiences as a doctoral student. I noted the intersections of identities of my participants and how their identities have or have not influenced their doctoral education experiences.

In further explication of my doctoral education experiences, I am enrolled part-time and I attend a satellite campus. Thus, I am not intimately involved in the campus culture at the PWI. I have read stories of marginalization but I have not had any of these experiences in my program. My doctoral cohort was majority African American female, thus I never felt like the token and was always visible in the classroom. Since my program is social justice oriented, I received full support for my research agenda and had the freedom to use culturally appropriate theories. I am also taught and mentored by diverse faculty members who are advocates for social justice. Thus, I have experienced much growth in my program and in my personal development. I own that my doctoral experience is unique and honored the different educational experiences of my participants. I anticipated that my knowledge and training in counseling skills would be beneficial in conducting qualitative interviews. I have training in building relationships, showing unconditional positive regard, and asking probing questions. These skills are useful in building the researcher-participant relationship and gathering rich data (Wertz, 2005).

Finally, I endeavored to produce counter-hegemonic research to empower historically marginalized groups. Too often, researchers focus on the deficits or struggle that people from historically marginalized groups face in the pursuit of higher education (Louque & Garcia, 2000; Pollard & Welch, 2006). Since starting my Ph.D. program, I read countless articles informing me of the barriers, the attrition rates, and other information pertaining to the negative experiences African American women face in doctoral education. What about the factors that contribute to their successful persistence? Moreover, how do working-class women who have multiple intersections of marginalization succeed in the ivory tower? The continuous reproduction of deficit-oriented research perpetuates the negative controlling images ascribed to historically marginalized groups (Collins, 2008; Pollard & Welch, 2006). In opposition to this trend, I

intended to produce transformative research (Mertens, 2009) that examined and highlighted the strengths, attributes, and methods of resiliency working-class African American women possess as they pursue one of the highest academic degrees in the nation, the Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board Process

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviews and approves research studies to ensure research adheres to federal, institutional, and ethical guidelines. I submitted the research proposal for IRB approval after my dissertation committee approved the prospectus. After the study received IRB approval, I started to recruit participants (see Appendix A).

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

Participant Sampling

I used criterion and snowball sampling. Criterion sampling is appropriate when the researcher aims to select participants who meet important predetermined inclusion criteria (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling comprises asking an informant or participant to recommend other participants who meet predetermined criteria to participate in a study (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Groenewald, 2004). Ramirez (2013) asserted that snowball sampling techniques were most effective in locating students who readily identify with a lower/working-class status, due to the hidden nature of social class.

Seidman (2013) proposed two criteria for establishing the number of participants for a qualitative research sample. The first criterion is sufficiency, which entails the researcher selecting a range of participants that reflect the population of interest and provide readers with a chance to connect with the experiences of the participants. I adhered to this criterion by soliciting participants from various universities. Seidman's second criterion is saturation of the information. Saturation of the data is not typically the goal of phenomenological studies, thus

saturation of the data was not an objective of this study (Creswell, 2007). The goal of

phenomenological research and interviews is to gather enough data to reach an in-depth

understanding of the tentative manifestations of a phenomenon that will give voice to the stories

of relatively few participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions

(Seidman, 2013; Vagle, 2014). Creswell (2014) suggested a sample of 3 to 10 participants for

phenomenological studies. Ten participants were selected for this study, who provided an in-

depth illustration of their experience with the phenomenon of interest.

Inclusion criteria. African American women who self-identified with a working-class

social class status or other terms used to signify economic disadvantage (e.g., lower/under-class,

low-income, poor, or economically disadvantaged) enrolled in CACREP accredited counselor

education and supervision Ph.D. degree programs were eligible to participate in this study.

Educational literature has shown that at each degree level (e.g., masters, specialist, doctoral, or

professional degree programs), students' experiences are different; subsequently, the perceptions

of the experiences will vary (Clark, Mercer, Zeigler-Hill, & Dufrene, 2012). The current study

only included Ph.D. level students in the discipline of counselor education. Both full-time and

part-time students were eligible to participate in this study given that research studies have

shown that working-class African American women are likely to enroll in Ph.D. programs part-

time (Morris, 2008).

The participant recruitment sites were PWIs with a CACREP accredited Ph.D. program

in counselor education and supervision. I recruited participants who are currently enrolled.

Researchers have indicated that African American women doctoral students at PWIs are

critically aware of the challenges to their success in the culture of doctoral education at PWI

(Grant & Simmons, 2008). hooks (2000) asserted that African American women develop

alternative skillsets and create unique strategies of resilience based on their possession of unique forms of non-dominant capital. I aimed to capture and name the unique navigational or resilience strategies that working-class African American women students use to persist in doctoral education at PWIs. I identified a list of 51 CACREP accredited Ph.D. programs at PWIs (see Appendix B). I identified these programs and institutions by using the CACREP Directory (2014) and ascertaining the institution's demographic information from the institution's website. For this study, a PWI is designated as an institution of higher education in which White students account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

Participant Recruitment

I recruited participants by distributing an email to the coordinators of the 51 graduate degree programs at the universities identified on the list (see Appendix C). The coordinators were asked to forward a research solicitation flyer to all graduate students enrolled (see Appendix D). The solicitation detailed the study, inclusion criteria, and my contact information. I also recruited participants by emailing the research solicitation to the counseling listserve Counselor Education and Supervision Network (CESNET) and asked members to distribute the email to African American women doctoral students. I sent an email containing the research solicitation to graduate coordinators at the 51 identified institutions and to the CESNET listserv in unison.

The American Psychological Association's (APA) Task Force on Socioeconomic Status recommended that researchers who study social class status employ both subjective and objective indicators of social class in research studies (Saegert et al., 2006). I utilized both subjective and objective indicators of social class to select research participants. Subjective

indicators refer to allowing participants to self-identify their social class status (Rubin, 2012).

Relative to the tenants of BFT and SCWV model, subjective indicators permit a subjective

conceptualization of social status, which allows respondents to classify themselves as working-

class (Rubin et al., 2014). In this way, before agreeing to participate in the study, respondents

were able reflect on their perceptions of their social position based on their individual, context-

specific experiences, and identification with particular reference groups (Rubin et al., 2014).

Rubin et al. (2014) stated that subjective indicators are strong indicators of social class status in

studies in the field of higher education because subjective measures capture the intersectionality

of ethnic minority students and the interpretational implications. Saegert et al. (2006) reported

"individuals can reliably report on where they stand in relation to others in terms of their social

class status" (p. 11). On the other hand, some researchers have indicated that many people are

not aware of what category of social class they belong to; thus, many people tend to over-

identify as middle-class (Rubin et al., 2014; Saegert et al., 2006). Therefore, the need for

researchers to utilize traditional objective indicators (e.g., occupation, educational level, income)

of social class in educational research is still necessary (Rubin et al., 2014; Saegert et al., 2006).

Data Collection

I communicated via phone and read the telephone eligibility screening script to interested

respondents to determine if they met criteria for inclusion (see Appendix E). I asked all

respondents to identify a pseudonym in order to protect privacy. If the respondent met the

criteria, I emailed the respondent a demographic questionnaire and consent form and asked the

respondent to email back the demographic questionnaire within two-three days (see Appendix F

and G). The demographic questionnaire requested respondents to provide information such their

race/ethnicity, gender, school, and additional information in order to determine if the respondents

met all inclusion criteria. The consent form contained information such as the identification of the researcher, purpose of the study, participant's rights to withdraw, potential benefits or risks for participation in the study, and procedures to protect participant confidentiality. I acknowledged that email communication may not be secure, thus no sensitive information was conveyed through email. I used both self-identification and information gathered from the demographic questionnaire to make a final determination of the respondent's eligibility to participate in the study. I kept all documents in a locked file cabinet at my home office. I selected the first participants who contacted me that met all inclusion criteria established for the study. After interviewing the tenth participant, I determined that I had gathered sufficient data from a range of participants that reflected the phenomenon of interest (Seidman, 2013).

Research Instrument

The researcher is the key instrument of data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). I was the primary researcher and collected all study data. The data collection and analysis were recursive in nature such that earlier data collection and interpretation informed later data collection (Kline, 2008).

I used qualitative interviews to collect data. Seidman (2013) asserted that interviews are a method of data collection used to gain an understanding of important educational and social issues through the experiences of individuals whose lives reflect those issues. Furthermore, hermeneutic phenomenologists espoused that dialogue should permeate every activity, with the researcher considering the social, cultural, and gender identities of participants and how various identities assist in understanding the phenomenon (Dowling, 2007; Finlay, 2014; Koch, 1999).

Interview Protocol

I conducted individual face-to-face interviews with two participants in a public location and individual video interviews with eight non-local participants in order to allow for audio and visual engagement (Creswell, 2014; Kvale, 2007). I conducted the video interviews in my home office using my personal computer. All interviews were audio-recorded, with permission of the participants.

 I used an open-ended semi-structured interview protocol to explore the participants' lived experiences (see Appendix H). Semi-structured interviews provide direction during the interview, allow the researcher to remain focused on the topic, and provide the flexibility to ask probing questions (Hays & Singh, 2012; Kvale, 2007). Because this study was guided by the framework of Black Feminist Thought, semi-structured interviews ensured that the understanding of the phenomenon was constructed using the participants' voices. I constructed two sets of interview questions based upon extant literature related to (a) African American women doctoral students' educational experiences in counselor education programs and other disciplines (Henfield et al., 2013; Shavers & Moore, 2014), (b) working-class students' experiences (Jones, 2003; Liu, 2011; Richardson et al., 2004; Rubin, 2012), (c) doctoral persistence (Bair & Haworth, 1999; Tinto, 1993, (d) Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2009), and (e) and phenomenological methodology (Fisher & Embree, 2000; Gadamer, 2004; Moustakas, 1994).

Interview Series. Phenomenological interviewing explores a reality that results from a realm of experiences that consist of particular occurrences and the meanings attached to a phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). Researchers have contended that interviewers who propose "one-shot" interviews limit the conceptualization of participants' experiences (Seidman, 2013).

In response to this position, I conducted a two-phase interview series informed by Schuman's (1982) three-interview series. Multi-phase interviewing is beneficial because it helps the researcher to gather a substantial amount of data and establish a positive relationship with participants (Seidman, 2013).

I started the interviews by reading the script on the interview protocol. Next, I proceeded to ask the first series of questions. Interview one focused on establishing the context of the participants' experiences. I gathered life-history and details of experiences pertaining to the phenomenon through the use of open-ended questions (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 2013). Phenomenological methodology focuses on concerns that involve the intersubjective *lifeworld* (Finlay, 2014). Exploring the life history allowed me to focus on the participants' lived relationship with the phenomenon such as being and becoming, embodiment and identity, belonging and needs, freedom and oppression, and other manifestations (Finlay, 2014; Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In adherence to the concept of the hermeneutic circle, I probed for additional information and clarity to clarify the meanings and offered my personal interpretations of the data (Kvale, 2007; Laverty, 2003). I made sure to memo during interviews in a field notebook and attended to nonverbal behaviors and interpersonal exchanges (Finlay, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). I created a case display after each interview (Hays & Singh, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first phase of interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes for each participant. The interviews were spaced approximately one week apart to allow participants time to reflect on data provided in the first interview (Seidman, 2013).

The second phase on interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes for each participant and focused on the reflection of meaning related to the participants' experiences with the phenomenon. Phenomenological inquiry using hermeneutic methods creates a space for

unconscious structures, remembrances, and varying perceptions of a phenomenon to emerge

(Polkinghorne, 1989). During interview two, I focused on the intellectual and emotional

connections the participants have with the phenomenon that were not addressed in interview one

(Polkinghorne, 1989; Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) suggested that interview two should

focus on concrete details of the participants' lived experience regarding the topic. I explored if

and how the participants' doctoral educational experiences were influenced by their working-

class status. At the completion of interview two, I asked participants to share the research

solicitation with other students that may fit the inclusion criteria.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the primary researcher and a hired transcriber. I

developed explicit written instructions to ensure consistency in the transcribing process (Kvale,

2007; Seidman, 2013). Sighs, crying, laughter, pauses, or other stoppages in speech were noted

as these could potentially be reactions to addressing the phenomenon (Finlay, 2014).

Strategies for Trustworthiness

Criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research should be coherent with the

paradigmatic underpinnings (Morrow, 2005). Parallel criteria and authenticity criteria have both

been suggested as relevant for interpretivist-oriented research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln &

Guba, 1986; Morrow, 2005). Parallel criteria of trustworthiness include criteria that parallel the

conventional /objectivist paradigm, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). It is important to note that parallel criteria may not

accomplish the same exact goals or knowledge claims as intended in quantitative research

(Morrow, 2005). Qualitative research takes an emic perspective that focuses on finding

categories of meaning from one or more individuals being studied (Morrow, 2005). The criteria

for trustworthiness (parallel criteria) in this study intend to respond to questions concerned with truth, value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Credibility refers the internal consistency of the study (Morrow, 2005). I demonstrated credibility through the use of (1) prolonged engagement with the phenomenon, (2) triangulation, (3) member checks, and (4) peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I employed prolonged engagement by considering my personal exposure with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Vagle, 2014), and by dwelling in the related literature (Finlay, 2014). I employed triangulation of data by cross-checking data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) with the existing empirical studies related to working-class students in Ph.D. programs. I used theoretical triangulation by situating findings within the framework of BFT and the SCWV model (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently in order to triangulate findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011) and identify the saliencies of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Practitioners of hermeneutic phenomenology have suggested that feedback and further discussion should continually occur with study participants (Dowling, 2007; Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb, 2003). I utilized member checking by sharing analytical thoughts and drafts of the case display, interpreted themes, and final report with the participants (Finlay, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). Member checking was used to ensure the accuracy of the interpretations of participants' responses (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). I used case displays and a field notebook to manage the data (Miles & Hubmerman, 1994).

I utilized three colleagues who were current doctoral candidates as members of my research team. The research team assisted with data analysis and served as peer debriefers to elicit feedback throughout the study. Team member number one and two had familiarity with

qualitative inquiry and phenomenological approaches. Team member number three had familiarity with the phenomenon under investigation (i.e., working-class status). Ethical and substantive validation were accounted for through the use of peer debriefing, informed consent, empowering marginalized groups, and reporting findings that may promote social justice (Hays & Singh, 2012) in accordance with the American Counseling Association's (ACA) codes of ethics for counseling research (ACA Code of Ethics, 2014).

Transferability refers to the ability of the reader to decide how the research findings may relate to other research, contexts, processes, and participants (Morrow, 2005). I established transferability by providing "thick descriptions" of the data gathered from selected interviews in order for readers to make judgments about how the findings can be applied elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The goal of qualitative research is not to make broad generalizations but to gather an in-depth meaning of the experiences of a small sample of individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Dependability refers the stability and consistency of the research process across time (Morrow, 2005). To account for dependability I tracked the emerging themes, influences on data collection and analysis chronologically in a field notebook throughout the research process. Confirmability refers to idea that the integrity of the findings is situated in the data and the research should tie together the data, process, and findings in order to confirm adequacy of the findings (Morrow, 2005). I accounted for confirmability by bridling, member checking, peer debriefing, and using thick descriptions to present the data (Hays & Singh, 2012; Vagle, 2014).

Authenticity Criteria

Authenticity criteria are also suggested to ensure rigor in interpretivist-oriented research (Morrow, 2005). Authenticity criteria include fairness, ontological authenticity, educative

authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. Fairness is honoring and presenting a balanced view of all values and constructions. I established fairness by using the participants' own words in descriptions when possible, being mindful of perspective taking during interviews, and bridling personal views (Morrow, 2005; Vagle, 2014). I documented findings that differed from the literature, the conceptual framework, or my presumptions in the field notebook. Ontological authenticity refers to expanding or elaborating on participants' individual constructions (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Morrow, 2005). I established ontological authenticity by paying particular attention to how meanings and experiences relate to the context, culture, and the researcher relationship. I accounted for educative authenticity by establishing a complex description of how working-class is experienced. Catalytic authenticity was accounted for by disseminating findings so that stakeholders understand the doctorate education experiences of working-class academics. Tactical authenticity was accounted for by using the findings to empower working-class doctoral students to persist despite historically marginalized positions.

Data Analysis

The aim of a phenomenological study is to reveal essential structures, logic, and interrelationships that relate to the phenomenon under examination (Polkinghorne, 1989). Giorgi (1997) added that the ultimate outcome of phenomenological analyses is not just to elucidate the "essential structure but rather the structure in relation to the varied manifestations of an essential identity" (p. 250). The researcher's task in phenomenological data analysis is to capture the elements of a unified experience with consideration of the influence of contextual factors (Giorgi, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1989).

Data analysis of phenomenological research employs a series of steps. According to Polkinghorne (1989), who synthesized the data analysis processes of Giorgi (1975), Colaizzi (1978), and Van Kaam (1969), the basics of phenomenological data analysis include:

a) dividing the original data into units

b) transforming the units into meanings that are expressed in phenomenological concepts

c) transforming the data to provide a description of the experiences.

Analysis of the qualitative data in the current study was informed by Moustakas' (1994) and Cohen, Kahn, and Steeves' (2000) recommendations of how to analyze phenomenological data. These authors have expanded previous phenomenological data analysis techniques.

First, I bridled my thoughts about the phenomenon of working-class in my journal. My preconceptions included the anticipation that participants would easily share their experiences with me because I am from a working-class background and that participants would have positive experiences while seeking their doctoral degree. After both interview one and two were transcribed for the first participant, I read the first complete transcript to get a sense of the whole (Finlay, 2014), then re-read line-by-line to identify discrete emic and etic codes within the data that pertained to the phenomenon of working-class and factors that influenced the participant's educational experiences and doctoral persistence. I notated in the margins of the documents to identify important statements and expressions (Hays & Singh, 2012). I repeated this process with the remaining nine transcripts. I emailed each participant a copy of her transcription and individual case display for member checking. Participants felt comfortable with the way I captured their experiences and they did not adjust any data. I emailed each complete transcript to members of the research team. The research team members coded each transcript independently.

Using a Microsoft Office document template, I created a codebook that contained 86 codes and code descriptions and emailed the codebook to members of the research team. I met with the research team to discuss data from the transcripts, codes, and code definitions. The research team and I reexamined the codes to eliminate data that did not reflect information deemed necessary to respond to the research question. I transferred the eliminated data into a miscellaneous category in my codebook as a means to reserve the data, in case it became useful at a later point in data analysis (Bednall, 2006). We reduced the original set of codes from 86 to 71 due to the redundancy of certain codes.

I refined data into textural descriptions or units of meaning using verbatim quotes to understand the phenomenon of interest. The 71 codes were grouped into 29 meaning units. After carefully re-reading transcripts and reviewing the meaning units, I created a horizontalization chart using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The 29 meaning units were divided into six broad categories. For example, I grouped the following meaning units: *I always knew I was capable, I am intrinsically motivated, I am not a quitter* into a category labeled Confidence and Determination.

Next, I extracted participants' quotes from the transcripts and placed the statements within the six categories in the horizontalization chart (Moustakas, 1994). I emailed the chart to the research team in order to dialogue about the categories. After gathering feedback from the research team, I reduced the data by eliminating overlapping and vague statements found in the horizontalization chart. I identified structural descriptions in the data. Structural descriptions represent the possible variations among meaning of a shared experience (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Last, I clustered invariant elements (i.e., elements of responses that remained constant) of the participant's experiences and assigned a thematic label. I identified three major themes in the

data. I emailed each participant a document that contained the brief description of each theme for a second round of member checking. Participants did not suggest any modifications to the themes. It is important to note that while the steps of data analysis described are presented in a structured fashion, the process at times was more cyclical and recursive as anticipated in hermeneutic phenomenology (Laverty, 2003).

Chapter Summary

This chapter delineated the study's qualitative research design and methodological approach of hermeneutic phenomenology. I stated the phenomenon of interest, which was the lived experiences of working-class African American women students in doctoral level education. I provided a rationale for qualitative research and posed a postionality statement that described my personal experiences with the phenomenon of interest and presumptions that could have influenced the research process. I outlined the procedure for the study in which I interviewed 10 participants using phenomenological interviewing techniques in a two-phase process. I delineated various steps in the data collection process and described steps that ensured trustworthiness and authenticity that included utilization of a research team, member checking, and triangulating the data. Last, I described the data analysis process. The next chapter describes the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand how a working-class

social class status influences the educational experiences of African American women doctoral

students in counselor education programs at PWIs. I also aimed to identify factors that

contribute to their doctoral persistence. The framework of this study was grounded in Black

Feminist Thought (BFT) and the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM). I utilized the themes

of BFT and the assumptions of the SCWM as lenses to analyze the data. BFT serves to promote

the affirmation of Black women's self-definition, self-determination, and self-valuation and

gives attention to the interlocking nature of class, race, and gender oppression (Collins, 2009).

The SCWM helps people to make sense of their social class perceptions, economic

environments, feelings, and patterns of behavior related to social class status (Liu et al., 2004).

My study sample included 10 African American women who self-identified as having a

working-class background. I conducted individual two-phase semi-structured interviews with

each participant. Participants were currently enrolled at PWIs in multiple regions of the United

States. Participants' ages ranged from 25-38. The participants were in various stages of their

Ph.D. programs ranging from first year to fifth year. Nine of the participants were employed in

some capacity; five participants were employed off campus. Eight of the participants reported

that they were the first persons in their family to attend college and six of the participants were

married. Participants' demographic information, identified by pseudonyms, is provided in Table

1. I chose not to elaborate further on each participant individually in order to protect the

participants' identities.

Table 1.

Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Year in Program	Enrollment Status	Employment Status	Raised in one or two parent homes	First in family to attend college
Aubrey	25	1st	full-time	part-time on campus	mother and father	yes
Charissa	34	5th	full-time	full-time off campus	mother and father	yes
Chloe	37	1st	full-time	part-time graduate assistant	mother and father	yes
Kia	31	4th	full-time	full-time off campus	mother and father	yes
Lauren	29	3rd	full-time	part-time on campus	mother-single parent	no
Marie	38	3rd	full-time	not employed	mother-single parent	no
Michelle	34	4th	part-time	full-time off campus	mother-single parent	yes
Mollie	31	3rd	full-time	part-time off campus	mother-single parent	yes
Natalie	33	2nd	full-time	full-time graduate assistant	mother and father	yes
Shanice	28	1st	part-time	full-time off campus	mother - single parent and foster parents	yes

The findings of this study are reflective of the central research question: What are the

lived experiences of working-class African American women students in counselor education

doctoral programs at PWIs? Three themes were identified in the data: 1) Working-Class Virtues,

2) Development of Self-Efficacy and Resiliency, and 3) Utilization of Personal and Academic

Support Systems. A visual relationship of the core themes that influence the doctoral persistence

of working-class African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs is

provided in Figure 1. In the following sections, I describe each theme and include thick

descriptions of the participants' experiences in an effort to accurately capture and communicate

the meaning of the lived experience for each participant (Cohen et al., 2000).
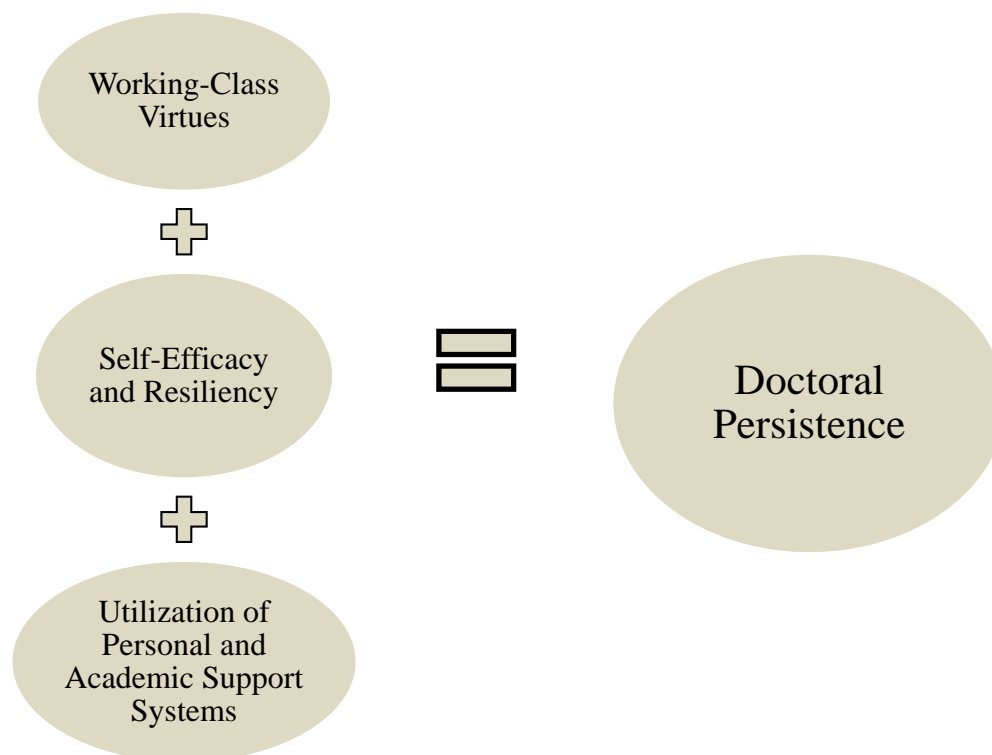
Figure 1.

Factors That Influence the Doctoral Persistence of Working-Class African American Women Doctoral Students in Counselor Education Programs at PWIs

Theme 1: Working-Class Virtues

Participants' working-class identity was embedded in their existence. Some participants

described the phenomenon of working-class as normalcy or their way of being. For example,

Natalie stated, "*It is who I am…why I'm here today*." Charissa expressed, *It's a part of who I*

am, it's part of my identity." The domain of Consciousness, Attitudes, and Saliency in the

SCWM helped to glean an understanding of how participants were keenly aware of their

working-class status and considered their class status as central to their personal identity. A few participants became emotional as they reflected on how their working-class background affected their doctoral education experiences. I engaged in the process of the hermeneutic circle, and shared some of my lived experiences as a working-class academic (Cohen et al., 2000). The sharing of experiences helps to fuse the horizons of understanding between the researcher and participant (Finlay, 2014; Gadamer, 2004). The majority of the participants honored their working-class identity; although, they perceived it as a very personal and private aspect of their lives. I was able to gain further insight in regards to how a working-class identity influenced doctoral education experiences, as participants' became increasingly comfortable sharing details of their lived experiences.

Eight participants observed their parents work multiple labor-intensive jobs and two participants obtained jobs in early adolescence to help their parents maintain household finances. By observing their parents or working themselves, each participant adopted a strong work ethic, which I interpreted as a virtue of growing up in working-class environments. An ingrained work ethic was a common factor that influenced doctoral persistence for each participant. Participants provided descriptions of their working-class backgrounds and the experiences that instilled a strong work ethic.

> *You really have it instilled in you that you have to work for everything that you have. Now, I can see that my parents really did bust their tails to be able to provide the things that they could for me. It was like a really strong foundation showing me what I would have to do and that nothing is going to be handed to me. Nothing is going to be given to you.* (Lauren)

I have been socially conditioned. My parents both did very strenuous labor-intensive field work. My dad worked in shipyards and in addition to that, he's done work like landscaping …a jack of all trades, just to make a livable wage for his dependent children and his wife to maintain the household. My mother has had numerous health ailments but continued to work. (Charissa)

My mom and my dad. I think it's just like their drive even though like they're not in any kind of glamorous jobs and all but the fact that I see my mom going to work, cleaning the rooms, like even when she's sick, she's going out on terrible snow days just to make sure that people's hotel rooms are clean. Just seeing how motivated, how diligent she is to make sure that she does a job well done. I've seen that persistence. So even if it's not the most glamorous job, the fact that they're so responsible, they're so reliable. (Natalie)

Two participants' work ethic was ingrained by having to obtain jobs at an early age.

I got my first job when I was 14, working at an ice-cream shop. That was to make ends meet, to get some more things in the house, more things that we needed, and I was okay with that. I have worked every day since. I worked at least 2-3 jobs until I had my kids. It's just something that was ingrained. (Michelle)

Internally, I think it [work ethic] added a lot to who I am. I think that if I hadn't seen my mother work two jobs most of the time, I wouldn't have the work ethic that I have. I've had a job every day of my life since I was 14. If not one, two. I think every day since I was 17 I have had two jobs. Being from that kind of background, it's really put this work ethic and this drive in me, this motivation. (Kia)

Participants reflected on the idioms often used in their working-class groups or origin such as "*you have to work hard to get ahead*" and how the expressions have helped them to persist

through various stages in their doctoral programs. For instance, participants made the following statements:

> *With my background, you learn to work hard and then you also learn that you have to stay a step ahead too. You pretty much learn early on that nothing is going to be given to you. That is the expectation that you begin to have so you just go into stuff working very hard because that's been the experience*. (Shanice)

> *For me, working-class means you work hard to get to where you want to go. You work hard and in the end you end up getting what you want*. (Michelle)

As a result of observing their parents work relentlessly throughout their childhood, having to obtain employment at an early age, or having various financial obligations, the majority of participants felt uncomfortable disconnecting from the workforce while pursuing their doctorate. As suggested in the SCWM, the participants desired to remain committed to certain values and behaviors that are central to their social class status and groups of origin. Nine participants maintained either full-time or part-time employment while enrolled in their doctoral programs. Participants felt that because they were from working-class backgrounds, maintaining employment was a necessity. Michelle stated *"Unlike most of the students who were full-time students and GAs [graduate assistants], I had to have a job to survive. Because I was working-class, that's just how it worked."* Kia, who was employed full-time off campus, stated *"If I did not work, I have no other means. If I were to lose my job today, tomorrow, it would be detrimental even though we [she and husband] have a second income."* Natalie received funds to cover tuition and living expenses; nevertheless, she expressed the need to maintain employment. Participants expressed the need to maintain employment in order to support their children, maintain health benefits, or cover unmet financial needs that were not covered by funds from assistantships and student loans.

Maintaining employment often complicated doctoral persistence by diverting focus from coursework, impeding the ability to establish meaningful relationships with peers and faculty, and increasing time to degree completion. Several participants were less involved in program professional development activities (e.g., attending and presenting at conferences, participating on research teams). For instance, maintaining full-time employment off campus influenced Charissa's productivity and relationships with peers and faculty. Charissa shared,

> *It impacts my ability to develop relationships with my peers and faculty. It has affected my availability and also my productivity. We're working full-time so with being a full-time student, I'm not on campus as often as my peers. I'm there in class and then I have to hurry up and get out…I think also with working, as far as time management and organizing my schedule that has been something that has been a bit debilitating, challenging, and hindering for me in the process.*

Michelle shared,

> *I worked full-time during my doctoral study and other students were like GAs or TAs. So they finished years before I was done. This is my 10th year technically. But I never gave up. I just persevered. I am not a quitter. I think a lot of it is because they think we quit anyway, they don't think that Black folks finish things that they start. So let me prove them wrong. A lot of that plays in my mind subconsciously. It keeps me going.*

Despite the challenges they faced balancing employment with doctoral studies, participants demonstrated a strong will to persevere. BFT espouses that historically, African American women have had to maintain employment to sustain the economic position of their families (Collins, 2009). Aligning with the themes of BFT, the participants displayed sound determination to succeed and aspired to disprove negative stereotypes of working-class African American women.

By using their working-class virtues and agency, the women often mitigated circumstances that threatened their doctoral persistence.

In essence, working-class virtues emerged from participant's early life experiences. Participants' adopted an ingrained work ethic from observing their parents work multiple labor-intensive jobs or being employed at an early age in order to contribute to household finances. The value of having an ingrained work ethic was similar, as each participant viewed their work ethic as a positive attribute that has helped to influence educational success and doctoral persistence. In accordance with the SCWM, participants' ingrained work ethic reflect a belief and value that was instilled in childhood and associated with their social class status. Working-class virtues helped participants to manage the many demands of doctoral level education, especially the ability to persist while maintaining full-time or part-time employment.

Theme 2: Development of Self-Efficacy and Resiliency

As participants shared details of their early life experiences, they described how their experiences of growing up in a working-class environment contributed to the development of self-efficacy and resiliency. Experiences with economic disadvantage fostered internal drive and a positive perception of abilities, despite having less access to auxiliary academic resources and exposure to additional learning opportunities. Black Feminist scholarship emphasizes that African American women are able to remain resilient and empowered even in extremely difficult circumstances such as poverty (Collins, 2009). All of the participants used similar statements that illustrated self-efficacy. For example, Mollie stated, "*I have always felt as if I was smart enough; I don't start things that I don't finish. If I work hard and I want it, I can figure out how to get it.*" Similarly, Lauren declared, "*I guess I've always been kind of an overachiever. If I start something, I finish it. I couldn't imagine not finishing or not getting it [doctoral program]*

done. That can't happen in my mind." Five participants' economic struggles were exacerbated because they were raised in single-parent households with one or no stable income or because they experienced bouts of homelessness. As a result of having to persevere amid economic challenges, participants developed resiliency that help them to endure adverse situations. Participants shared how their resiliency has helped them to persist in doctoral level education at PWIs.

> *This cannot break you [challenges faced in doctoral program], you have been through worse and I think that goes back to being from a working-class background. You know what struggle is and that's a real struggle. I think if you realize it as you have these set of tools. If you had the tools back then, those tools will serve you well now.* (Marie)
>
> *I think that resiliency comes from how I grew up. I am no stranger to adversity. It's a lot to manage [doctoral program], but I think that because I did come from a single-parent household with a low socioeconomic status, I have to the tools to manage it and to do it seamlessly.* (Mollie)
>
> *I think my resiliency has helped me maintain. I am not the smartest, but I will find ways to get what I need. You find a way when there is a barrier; you find a way to get through.* (Shanice)

A few participants shared how their experiences with economic disadvantage affected their engagement in doctoral classes. Natalie described her hesitation to engage in class discussions.

> *They [peers] have all of this exposure to different things, so when they're talking about all these things. I kind of felt like…I just felt like I did not have enough of the same experience to offer my input. I was not sure if it was that they were exposed to more things and they had a better school system.*

Shanice affirmed:

> *Not having the same prior knowledge as other people and level of confidence and*
> *competence regarding certain issues like internationally, that stuff is so far from me*
> *sometimes so I am not even concerned with it although I need to be in order to be an*
> *effective counselor. The things you worry about are just different and that makes you*
> *experience school differently because you are always trying to stay ahead of the game. It*
> *can just be an area of vulnerability. You don't want people to see it as a weakness and*
> *that's hard.*

Participants compensated for their perceived disadvantages by displaying distinctive efficacious behaviors. Participants immersed themselves into their doctoral assignments in order to prove their academic competency. Chloe shared:

> *What they [peers and faculty] don't realize is I work really hard to make sure that*
> *I'm knowledgeable. Like where some of my peers may read the excerpts of books, I read*
> *the entire textbook. I get online and I research supplementary information because I want*
> *to be knowledgeable and I don't like to be incompetent. Like, I just at times feel like I*
> *have to work twice as hard.*

Natalie discussed similar experiences.

> *I have to read a little bit extra so I can keep up with the conversations. I'm always on my*
> *computer looking up stuff to keep up with conversations. So that's been frustrating.*
> *Because they had exposure to a lot of things that I never had to deal with. So little things*
> *like that… I feel puts me at a little bit of a disadvantage…I always had to fight a little bit*
> *harder to prove my worth in school. Even now I would say as a doc student, I feel like I go*
> *above and beyond and go the extra mile to prove my worth.*

Shanice provided candid examples of the efficacious behaviors she exhibits in order to prove her academic competence.

> *My Saturdays I am up at 6 or 7am or coming home from class I stay up. I always find time to work, everybody is doing that, but like I have to do it even more. When we have reading assignments, I start reading super early because I want to make sure I understand what I am doing. When we have discussions, I have my stuff ready to go and I am usually the person leading the discussions. I am usually the person thinking of ways to challenge others on their thinking because I feel like when people get that perception of me or when they see someone who looks like me or they assume they are like me they will get the perception of she is this [competent]. People don't want to admit that we have these preconceived notions about people and what we think about them but I hope that by doing that it helps. I have my notes, with pre-drafted questions. With writing assignments, I try to get started early, people are turning in 3 pages mine is 6. If something is not required of me, I still give that extra effort. Just because you feel like that is what you have to do.*

I asked Shanice if she felt her extra effort was beneficial or detrimental to her doctoral persistence and she asserted:

> *I think it's a little bit of both. I think that it is according to who it is. If I am working with some of my classmates and they perceive me as trying to do the most then that works to my detriment. But again, they don't understand where that comes from so it doesn't even matter, it is what matters to me. If I have a professor who tells me that it is affecting me or causing me stress and affecting my work then I will think about it, but the detriment of it concerning my peers I don't care. Only if it affects my effectiveness. But from me going above and beyond, it's an attribute that I have in me that a lot of other people don't.*

Each of the participants developed self-efficacy and resiliency as a result of growing up in economically disadvantaged environments. Participants faced distinctive circumstances such as growing up in single parent homes, being in foster care, or not having stable housing, which presented various challenges that influenced their access and exposure to auxiliary learning opportunities. Perceived knowledge gaps influenced some participants' willingness to engage in class discussions and some participants had difficulty relating to course content. In order to compensate for perceived disadvantages, participants took additional measures to display their academic competency. Participants were confident that their resiliency and efficacious behaviors benefited their doctoral persistence in counselor education programs at PWIs.

Theme 3: Utilization of Personal and Academic Support Systems

Although the women had "pockets" of positive experiences throughout their doctoral tenure, most experienced both subtle and overt instances of classism, racism, and sexism in the academic setting. For some women, their working-class status, in addition to being the only African American in their courses, intensified the hostile and derogatory slights from peers and faculty. BFT draws attention to the notion that Black women experience a decreased sense of belonging in academic settings that are predominated by White people, referencing this phenomenon as the "outsider within" (Collins, 1986, p.14). Eight women mentioned phrases that depicted feeling like an "*outsider.*" For example, Charissa shared, *"I consider myself a bit of an odd ball at times, I definitely stand out. I suffered with feeling like an impostor or an outsider*." Likewise, Aubrey stated, "*I kind of feel like I am an outsider*." The utilization of personal and academic support systems to abate feeling like an "outsider within" was essential to doctoral persistence for all participants. Participants identified four distinctive systems of

support: 1) Family Support, 2) Programmatic and Institutional Support, 3) Peer Solidarity and Cohort Support, and 4) Religious and Spiritual Support.

Family Support

Familial support served as a motivating factor toward doctoral persistence and degree completion for all participants. The women often depended on their families for emotional support when they faced trails or when they wanted to celebrate successful moments in their doctoral journey. Many of the women were first-generation college students and expressed that their families did not fully understand the process of attaining a doctoral degree. Nonetheless, their families served as a primary source for emotional support and motivation to persist.

Familial expectations. Like my momma, the last time I saw her in the hospital dying, I was like what am I going to do when you die and she said "you are going to go to school in the fall." I was like okay girl! (Laughs) She knew I had got accepted and she was proud. (Mollie)

Because they were so proud of me and worked so hard for me to get me to where I am, I felt like I have to live up to or beyond whatever their expectations were. To make sure that they are proud of me. (Michelle)

Several women were motivated to persist because they served as role models for family members. Eight of the participants who were the first persons in their families to attend college described how their successful doctoral persistence positively influenced the educational trajectory of their family.

I am a first generation college student and after I went to college, all of my cousins went. I am the first to do doctoral level education so there's so much pressure on me from the family constantly. "Oh, she's in a doctoral program." I hear my aunt say that all the time

to my cousins. And then I'll get some family members that say, "thank you for setting an

example and for being that trail blazer." It gives them hope that they can do it too. So

there's the pressure of not disappointing my family. (Chloe)

Being a first generation college student and making it this far, you have a lot riding on

you. You have a lot of people watching you and you have a lot of people looking up to

you because you are doing something and it's making it okay for other people to try to do

it. I am also aware of that. I do feel that sense of responsibility. (Mollie)

While all of the women cited their family members (e.g., husbands, mother, aunts, and

cousins) as the primary source of personal support, the women often had to depend on other

systems of support due to their families' unfamiliarity with doctoral level education. Participants

sought and found a support system through certain people and programs at their respective

institutions.

Programmatic and Institutional Support

Throughout their doctoral journey, some participants found support through their doctoral

advisors or other student support services. However, this was not the case for many of the

participants. The majority of the participants reported that their programs and institutions

contributed minimally to their doctoral persistence. Michelle expressed frustration as she

described the lack of support she received in her program.

Silence. I don't have anything for you. I don't know if it is because I am at a PWI but I

definitely do not feel like I got the support that I needed. I think if I put forth effort they

put forth a little bit more effort. But they didn't do anything like, let's do this to help

Michelle get over this hump because she doesn't know. I mean I wasn't a scholarly

writer when I started. Chapter 1 took about 20 times to write. Like I had no idea what I

was doing. My advisor never picked up the phone and was like here…do this. I picked up

books on my own and started reading. Going to workshops, self-teaching. I don't feel

like I had a lot of help at my university.

Marie shared similar sentiments:

Nothing. We have a mentoring program but the mentoring program is only as good as your

mentor. If you don't have a mentor that reaches out to you it's not very effective. So not

much. I have a doctoral adviser but he wasn't very helpful. Most of the time, he wasn't

available.

On the other hand, four participants shared that although their program or institution had little

influence on their doctoral persistence, they felt supported by their doctoral advisors. Kia

shared:

I think the only institutional factor that is present for me is probably my chair. I do

consider her a very influential person. She pushes me. She questions me at very turn, but

she pushes me, and I like that. I think she honestly cares about what's happening in my

journey, as far as to help me stay on track, I really I appreciate her. I see her as

someone who cares about my journey and wants to make sure that my journey is

successful, she doesn't want me squatting in this program for 13 years. She wants me

done and she wants me to be an educator. She oftentimes offers me opportunities too. To

make sure I am growing as a professional, whereas a lot of other professors do not.

Lauren described how the support from her dissertation chair has influenced her doctoral

persistence. She discussed how her dissertation chair has helped her in various ways by being

available, caring, showing interest in her research, and helping her acquire professional

development opportunities. Lauren shared:

> *My dissertation chair is amazing. He is literally phenomenal…I pretty much knew what I was going to do my entire doctoral program. He was already excited about it. So having that investment and caring about my research and my dissertation has been amazing. Just supporting me, because he knew that I really wanted to go into a school counseling program. Just getting me those opportunities and connecting me in places or with things that came up that were school counseling related. He has definitely been supportive from day one…he's willing to invest in you. And he is a White male and probably privileged more than likely.*

Natalie also received support from her doctoral advisor. Natalie felt that her experiences were validated and she frequently observed how her African American woman advisor managed challenges she faced as a faculty member.

> *My adviser has been a very positive influence. She's a minority too. She sees what I'm going through and she's been really great because she has kind of experienced the same thing in academia on the faculty side. Feeling like she's not heard all the time…I'm seeing how much she fights for herself to kind of like get certain programs started. I am like "wow" even she feels ignored and not heard sometimes. And look at all of these cool publishing opportunities that she has. She's invited me to some of it too. I think she's really trying to make me feel connected and involved. I appreciate her a lot. She randomly sends me emails like "are you okay?"*

Shanice expressed that her doctoral program has an authentic emphasis on social justice, which contributes to her doctoral persistence. Shanice shared that she feels valued and validated in her doctoral program.

I think the thing about this program is that they really truly acknowledge different identities and the oppressions. And it is something we can talk about and it's validated. We read research related to it and it doesn't seem like I am a pessimist. The experiences are real and that is motivating. This program is really about social justice and the advocacy component that is about doing something about it and it pushes us to do something about it. I feel like I am in a space where I can challenge that or question that and it not be frowned upon. I definitely feel like it's just my program and not the university itself. There are little pockets of hope because of my program. It is one of openness and honesty. I feel validated and that is big for me. Having a place where you can voice your concerns and you not feel shunned or looked down upon because your experiences are different. I feel like my professors care.

The climate in the counselor education program, not the university overall, was a place where Shanice felt validated and comfortable.

 Receiving services from the university counseling center contributed to Marie's doctoral persistence.

I took advantage of counseling services at the university. He is a Black male who very much comes from a framework of like Black liberation psychology. He was able to help me tease out some of those issues around race and gender that I might not of ordinarily been able to do with another type of counselor.

Many of the participants in my sample had difficulty identifying programmatic or institutional factors that have contributed to their doctoral persistence. However, participants were able to pinpoint certain people, such as doctoral advisors, who aided persistence by showing interest in their well-being, enthusiasm about their research topics, and connecting them with

professional development opportunities. For one participant, having an African American female advisor was beneficial, as she felt her advisor could directly relate to her experiences at a PWI. For others, having an advisor who was responsive and caring was more important than the race, gender, or class status of the advisor. Other participants utilized student support services, or navigated their programs without much programmatic or institutional support.

Peer Solidarity and Cohort Support

Despite the fact that some participants were underrepresented in their programs, participants emphasized the importance of finding a support system amongst peers. Five participants established a system of support by connecting with classmates who were also members of historically marginalized groups. For example, Kia shared:

> *We have had a joke throughout our process, the privileged and the oppressed. It's not a joke though, it's how it ended up working out, that half were privileged and half of us have to work for a living. So, it has contributed a lot to my identity there…There are certain people I can connect with like this one man of color. I think that it's really important to connect with someone with some likeness when you are at a PWI.*

Laruen shared,

> *You end up making connections with people from other vulnerable populations, like the gay guy in my cohort. We just happened to identify this because there were a lot of conservative people in our program. We just kind of identified and started linking up in those kind of ways. They expect him and I to always be on like LGBTQ issues and any type of social injustice.*

Lauren also engaged in activities with classmates that helped her to feel connected.

I actually have a group in my cohort that I do a lot of stuff with. We have made friends and we have done a lot of research together and it really kind of started out as a ride down to a conference, that I happened to ride down with them. We just kind of clicked and started talking about research and we did like one project together and kind of kept doing it. We have become each other's accountability partners on things. We call it group therapy. It's just for us to completely wind down from the doctoral program and just kind of get it all out. We have food and wine. That is very helpful because I can't really talk with other friends about this. I have no friends in doctoral programs. I have no friends in counseling. That's kind of like the only place that we can even talk about school related stuff and not bore people.

Natalie and Chloe were appreciative of the cohort model in their respective programs and expressed that the cohort model made it easier to establish supportive relationships with peers.

I have a really cool cohort. Even though I feel like I'm drastically different from them. I do think we have each other's back. We all kind of pull through it and look out for each other when we need to and we work together. They've been very supportive. (Natalie)

We are a pretty good cohort. There's a great support system there. We have a cohort Facebook page where we all communicate. There is support through the program. (Chloe)

Chloe explained how program coordinators ensured that her cohort was oriented to the doctoral program.

We met all of the professors in the program. Within the first few weeks, they all came in and talked to us. So we know that there's a support system there. We had an academic adviser. You just get a sense of genuineness from them. And I think it's just the nature of

the program, it's counseling. You know that you can go talk with them, the resources they

have. There were referrals in place like if you need additional assistance with personal

issues, we have those in place. I guess a lot of resources to help us be successful.

While some participants viewed their peers or cohorts as support systems, other participants

purposely isolated themselves away from their peers in order to persist. Mollie felt that the

differences in her social class, race, and geographic origin made her feel disconnected from her

classmates.

I have always separated myself from the group a little bit because that is how I survived.

Especially like in these extreme circumstances, that's what I had to do. They already

don't know how to take me because I am Black, and I got an accent, and I am not scared

to say what is on my mind. As a result, they really don't know how to take me.

Charissa also purposely separated herself from classmates.

I limited my interactions with my fellow doc students because I did not necessarily feel

connected to them. Whenever there was a group assignment and in most of my classes,

there was an odd number of students, I was usually the one left over. I would either have

to be the fifth member of a group or I chose to work independently.

Whether participants connected with peers who shared historically marginalized statuses,

or found support through engaging in activities with members of their cohort, developing a

connection with peers was a constant thread. Nonetheless, a few participants had difficulty

establishing relationships with peers and did not identify their peers as part of their support

system.

Religious and Spiritual Support

Six of the ten participants found support through their religion or spirituality. All six of the participants reported that they did not frequently attend formal services or activities due to time constraints; however, they read scriptures or prayed as a means to remain grounded in their beliefs. Shanice, who identified as a Christian stated, "*My religion is an identity that positively affects me being in the program. I am not in church every Sunday but do believe in God. I am a Christian and without God I wouldn't be able to do this*." Aubrey, a Seventh-day Adventist, shared "*My religion keeps me going*." Aubrey expressed that her religious faith granted her the ability to balance the roles of spouse, employee, and doctoral student. Lauren's spirituality served as a source for emotional support when she faced obstacles in her program and personal issues.

> *Things kind of always happen, and have been happening this last year, my faith has just really like increased because I'm not going to worry about these things, I'm privileged to get into this program, everything else will work out. So I haven't been as stressed out as I was before, when I was trying to control everything. I used to be like "Oh my God, I can't do this" and "nobody understands I don't have money for this*."

Regardless of their doctrine of religion or spiritual beliefs, six participants expressed that religion or spirituality provided a high level of support that contributed to successful doctoral persistence.

Support systems were essential to the participants' doctoral persistence. Families often had high expectations for the students and motivated them to persist through their programs. Many of the participants were the first persons in their families to attend college and served as role models for their family members. After observing the participants' educational success, some members of the participants' families chose to pursue higher education. BFT calls

attention to the point that a working-class African American woman's agency and actions often benefit the educational and economic conditions of her entire family (Collins, 2009).

While family support was highly valued, participants needed additional support from within the academic setting. Largely, participants did not feel like they received adequate support from within their programs and institutions. Several participants felt as if they navigated their doctoral process alone. Some participants, however, found support through doctoral advisors who were in tune with their progress, cared about their well-being, and connected them with professional development opportunities. Participants established connections with classmates from other historically marginalized groups while others found support through engaging in off campus activities with members of their cohort. Participants who were not able to connect with program faculty or peers sought support through student support services. Religion or spirituality served as a means of support for six of the participants. Corresponding to the themes of BFT that draw attention to self-determination and agency, the working-class African American women in this study possessed the ability to create supportive structures that enabled them to resist oppressive circumstances, which positively influenced their doctoral persistence.

Additional Findings

The core themes discussed above emphasize the factors that contribute to the doctoral persistence of working-class African American women in counselor education programs at PWIs. However, other important findings emerged from the interviews that aid in understanding the women's lived experiences in the context of doctoral level education at PWIs. Although participants displayed appreciation for their working-class virtues and were proud of their educational success, most participants were not comfortable disclosing their working-class status

in the academic setting. The participants' willingness to share their experiences of economic disadvantage was predicated on the climate of their doctoral program, the sensitivity peers and faculty displayed regarding cultural differences, and the representation of other working-class students in their classes. Both BFT and the SCWM stress the importance of analyzing ways that contextual factors may significantly influence a person's lived experiences.

Seven participants either refused to disclose or were hesitant to disclose their working-class status in the academic setting. Although participants stated that they were not ashamed of their working-class background, some did not disclose their working-class status to avoid further stigmatization. The following thick descriptions illustrate the participants' discomfort disclosing their working-class status in the academic setting.

> *Honestly, I don't feel comfortable. I'll give them bits and pieces. Other than that, I am not disclosing much about it unless I feel like its applicable or it has some importance. I don't go deep because I feel like there is going to be this perception… I already feel like sometimes they may perceive me in a certain way because I don't have a certain vernacular...this use of words that they throw around. I am always hyperaware of that. Once they know about my experience, I feel like they will use it as ammunition. I don't want to use it as a crutch I guess, or being perceived as less than or not having the capability or the capacity, even though I am in the same program as them.* (Aubrey)

Similarly, Mollie shared:

> *I don't think I am that comfortable honestly…My peers are ignorant to a lot of stuff so if I tell them I grew up poor they might think or get a mental image that I was homeless on the street corner or some shit. Like they don't understand because that is just so far out of their scope. And two, I feel like I don't need another label. I don't. I definitely don't want*

anybody looking at me like "poor thang." I feel like people have to earn the rights to my

story and they have not earned the rights. Like not at all. Because at [North University],

most of them, their education is paid for, so they can't relate to me at all. So it's like they

are even further removed from me. It's just another thing they can't relate to me on.

With my professors, the same thing. They are out of touch too.

Alternatively, three participants were open to disclosing and discussing their working-class status in the academic setting. These participants shared that they purposefully chose to pursue their doctorate in the field of counselor education in an effort to educate others on matters related to economic disadvantage and the impact it has in the field of counseling. For example, Lauren shared:

I feel like that's where we're supposed to have those conversations because it should be a

learning experience all the time for everybody, even if you are a tenured professor. Those

things need to be addressed especially if we're talking about educating other people on

being aware, on being cautious, sensitive, and understanding. I am completely

comfortable doing so. I want to bring awareness of what that means and how it impacts

other people, how it impacts clients, how it impacts students.

Each participant had strong feelings related to their willingness to disclose their working-class status in the academic setting. This finding draws attention to how the context of the doctoral environment at PWIs either hindered or empowered participants' willingness to share their personal experiences with economic disadvantage.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four presented the lived experiences of ten African American women doctoral students currently enrolled in counselor education programs at PWIs who identified with a

working-class status. Black Feminist Thought and The Social Class Worldview Model were used as lenses to illustrate how participants' intersecting class, race, and gender identities influenced their doctoral education experiences. The findings of this study were grouped into three themes: 1) Working-Class Virtues, 2) Development of Self-Efficacy and Resiliency, and 3) Utilization of Personal and Academic Support Systems. Overall, the interviews revealed that these working-class women possessed a strong work ethic and high levels of self-efficacy and resiliency, which have contributed to their educational success and doctoral persistence. The participants discussed how maintaining employment influenced their doctoral education experiences by affecting their academic productivity, participation in professional development activities, and ability to establish meaningful relationships with peers and faculty. As they navigated their respective programs, the women had distinctive systems of support that were instrumental to their successful doctoral persistence. Although the women honored their experiences of growing up or currently being in the working-class, they discussed how the climate of their doctoral programs at PWIs influenced their willingness to disclose their working-class status. The findings identified in this chapter serve as the basis of the discussion and implications in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to increase the understanding of how a working-class social class status influences the educational experiences of African American women enrolled in CACREP accredited counselor education doctoral programs at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). I aimed to explore factors that contributed to their successful doctoral persistence. This study used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to qualitative inquiry. Hermeneutic phenomenology draws attention to participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon within the context of their particular social location as opposed to the universal meaning or the essence of the phenomenon (Finlay, 2014). Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) informed the conceptualization of the study, the construction of the interview questions, and data analysis. The study addressed the central research question: What are the lived experiences of working-class African American women students in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs? Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings and the conceptual frameworks that grounded the study, implications, and recommendations for future research related to working-class African American women doctoral students.

Discussion

I identified three themes in the data that provide a synthesis of the findings with respect to the central research question. The three core themes identified were: 1) Working-Class Virtues, 2) Development of Self-Efficacy and Resiliency, and 3) Utilization of Personal and

Academic Support Systems. The themes share many similarities with findings from previous

studies; yet, in some areas, the findings of this study either enhanced or contradicted existing

literature.

Working-Class Virtues

All of the participants attributed much of their success in doctoral level education to their

working-class upbringing. The women possessed unique working-class virtues that positively

influenced doctoral persistence. They used words such as "diligent," "driven," "hard worker,"

"persistent," and "motivated" to describe working-class virtues. A key working-class virtue was

an ingrained work ethic. Participants acquired their work ethic from observing their parents

work multiple, labor-intensive, low wage jobs, or by having to work at an early age in order to

help supplement household income. The women's descriptions of an ingrained work ethic

resembled what is commonly termed as a Protestant Work Ethic (PWE), which signifies a

disposition toward hard work, self-discipline, and expectations of success (Beit-Hallahmi, 1979;

Christopher & Schlenker, 2005; Smrt & Karau, 2011). This is consistent with the SCWM, which

assumes that people typically adopt the behaviors performed normally within a particular social

class environment (Liu et al., 2004).

Connecting this assumption to the findings of the study, the women adopted working-

class virtues from their families of origin and utilized the virtues as a means to persist in their

respective doctoral programs. In essence, the attitudes and skills that helped participants to

withstand conditions of economic disadvantage in their personal lives were all the more useful in

doctoral level education.

Past literature has suggested that the attitudes, beliefs, and value systems of African

American working-class individuals are perceived by others as deficient (e.g., perceived as lazy,

unskillful) (Carter, 2003; Louque & Garcia, 2000); however, participants in the current study revered the values and practices upheld within the African American working-class culture. Through dialogue, the women elucidated how they honored their working-class experiences. A key tenet of BFT emphasizes the importance of granting African American women the opportunity to provide their own interpretations of their experiences, which will often counter deficit ideologies ascribed to working-class African American women and their families (Collins, 2009). Analyzing the findings through the lens of BFT draws attention to how each woman valued the beliefs, skills, and qualities attained from her working-class origin and utilized non-dominant cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) to persist in doctoral education. Past research supports the finding that working-class women of color doctoral students consider work ethic and other virtues adopted from their families to have a strong influence on their academic success (Gandara, 1982; Jones, 2004).

Nine of the participants stated that continuing to maintain employment while pursuing their doctorate was an absolute necessity. Several were not married, were single mothers, or were the breadwinners in their marriage and so had to maintain employment to retain health insurance, care for their children, or cover other financial obligations in their homes. A few of the women in the study had full academic scholarships that covered tuition and living expenses, yet they reported that it was still necessary to maintain employment to cover unmet financial needs. Previous researchers have also identified that unmet financial needs are considerably higher for doctoral students from working-class backgrounds (Cueva, 2013; Holly & Gardner, 2012). Given the findings of this study, it is reasonable to conclude that it is often necessary for working-class African American women students to maintain employment while pursuing their doctorate. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the livelihood of working-class African American

families is often contingent upon the woman's participation in the workforce (Collins, 2009; hooks, 1990, 2000). Furthermore, the SCWM indicates that people will exhibit patterns of behavior demonstrated by others in their social class of origin. Not only were the women maintaining employment to cover unmet financial needs, the women were uncomfortable disconnecting from the workforce because maintaining a job had been imparted as a necessity for survival in the African American working-class culture. In comparison to other studies that have mainly focused on how race and gender identities affect the doctoral education experiences of African American women (Morris, 2008; Shavers & Moore, 2014), the current study illuminates the influence that a working-class status has on African American women's doctoral experiences. The need to maintain employment had a distinctive meaning for these women, which emerged from their working-class upbringing.

Maintaining employment significantly influenced participants' doctoral education experiences. Students interacted less with faculty and peers and were less engaged in scholarly activities such as research team participation and professional conference attendance. For some participants, their time to degree completion was extended because of the time spent at their jobs. Existing persistence research has also identified working while attending college influences students' academic and social engagement in their programs (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Perna, 2006; Tinto, 1993) as well as time to degree completion (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). However, the current study is one of the first studies that has explicated the underlying historical connection linked to the need to maintain employment for working-class African American women in counselor education Ph.D. programs. Despite having to mitigate the additional challenges of maintaining employment while pursuing a doctorate, the women frequently referenced the value of their working-class virtues and their unwavering

intention to persist toward doctoral degree completion. Aligning with the tenet of BFT that espouses that African American women remain determined, even in the face obstacles (Collins, 2009), the women in this study were empowered to persist to degree completion.

Development of Self-efficacy and Resiliency

The values and experiences bestowed from their families of origin ultimately influenced how the participants perceived their own capabilities. Particularly, early socialization messages from their parents validating their academic aptitude and ability to persevere amid challenging circumstances influenced the development of self-efficacy and resiliency. For example, Shanice stated, "*my mom always pushed education and she pushed confidence as well and she always told me that I was just as good as anybody else if not better*." Self-efficacy influenced the participants' motivation, expectations, and commitment to persisting in their doctoral programs. The SCWM espouses that families serve an important socialization function through the instillation of values that set a foundation for future success (Liu et al., 2004). Early socialization messages from parents and others persons in their groups of origin helped participants to build confidence in their academic abilities.

As a possible manifestation of their self-efficacy and resiliency, the women in this study exhibited efficacious behaviors to prove themselves as academically competent in doctoral environments with their more affluent counterparts. Some of the women compensated for their perceived knowledge gaps by completing writing and reading assignments that were beyond what was required for specific doctoral courses. Previous researchers have also identified that low-income, first-generation college students (Rendón, 1994; Rendón-Linares & Muñoz, 2011) and African American women doctoral students (Shavers & Moore, 2014) display compensatory behavior when they attend predominantly White universities populated by middle and upper-

class students and faculty. The SCWM helped me to make meaning of the participants'
efficacious and compensatory behavior. Liu et al. (2004) noted:

> Consciousness is the degree to which an individual has an awareness that he or she
> belongs to a social class system and that this system plays out in his or her life; attitudes
> are those feelings, beliefs, attributions, and values related to social class as the individual
> understands it and the related corresponding behaviors. (p. 104)

The participants were fully conscious of the negative stereotypes of working-class African
American women. They intentionally exhibited behaviors (e.g., completing extra assignments,
monitoring vernacular) to disprove the negative stereotypes. Although the women expended
significant time and energy engaged in such behavior, they considered their actions as necessary
for successful doctoral persistence at PWIs. I interpreted the efficacious and compensatory
behaviors as manifestations of resiliency that helped the working-class African American women
to persist when faced with real or perceived barriers (e.g., knowledge gaps, discrimination)
during their doctoral studies. Black feminist scholarship emphasizes that resilience is an innate
strength of African American women (Collins, 1986, 2009; Grant, 2012).

Utilization of Personal and Academic Support Systems

Establishing systems of support, both outside and inside the academic environment, was
essential to the women's doctoral persistence. All participants expressed that familial support
was vital. Each of the participants received emotional support and motivation to persist from
members of her family. The majority of participants were the first persons in their families to
attend college. Accordingly, these women received much encouragement to persist in order to
set a positive example for other family members. Holly and Gardner's (2012) study documented
similar findings, indicating that first generation doctoral students operate under high expectations

of their family that may influence degree attainment. Nonetheless, the present findings differ

from Holly and Gardner's findings in some areas. Holly and Gardner found that some women

students expressed that their families were reluctant to support their educational endeavors and

questioned the utility of their degree. Different from Holly and Gardner's findings, all ten

women in this study expressed that their family members (e.g., spouses, parents, aunts, and

cousins) were highly supportive of their doctoral education endeavors.

The contrast in findings could relate to the differences in the sample population. Holly

and Gardner's study included first generation doctoral students from various socioeconomic

groups, races, genders, and academic disciplines. The present study sample included only

African American women counselor education doctoral students from economically

disadvantaged backgrounds. Chaney (2014) asserted that low-income African American

families valued the possibility that other family members could improve the educational

trajectory (via intergenerational literacy) of younger family members. Moreover, Chaney

highlighted that low-income African American families had inherent strengths such as strong

kinship bonds and a high achievement orientation. BFT emphasizes that kinship bonds are

salient to working-class African American women (Collins, 1989). Findings from the current

study suggest that working-class African American women find considerable support to persist

in doctoral level education from within their families and that their academic success could

possibly enhance the educational trajectory of their working-class family members.

Due to their families' unfamiliarity with the doctoral education process, some women

depended on programmatic and institutional support. Doctoral advisors who were responsive to

students' academic needs, personal wellness, research interests, and professional development

contributed to the participants' persistence. Consistent with other counselor education research

(Flynn et al., 2012; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005), "connections" or quality relationships between students and advisors aided doctoral persistence. Supportive doctoral advisors were especially important to working-class African American students in counselor education programs at PWIs, as these students were often unfamiliar with doctoral education and benefited from positive affirmation of their abilities, as well as insight on how to navigate their programs. BFT gives emphasis to the value of an ethic of care in the African American woman's culture (Collins, 1989; Grant, 2012). The ethic of caring theme in BFT suggests that African American women value the use of empathy, the display of concern for well-being, and the recognition of individuality of experiences (Collins, 1989; Grant, 2012). Doctoral advisors who displayed an ethic of care and recognized the unique needs of working-class students (e.g., need for flexibility, professional development opportunities) greatly influenced the participants' persistence.

Some participants established relationships with classmates who were also members of historically marginalized groups. Participants expressed that they felt better understood by classmates from other underrepresented groups. Past research has identified that African American students may be attracted to peers as well as faculty members from various minority groups because they understand the minority plight, which helps to validate students' experiences (Haskins et al. 2013; Robinson-Wood, 2009). Other participants established supportive relationships with members of their cohort and engaged in academic and recreational group activities. Socialization experiences provide a sense of connectedness and researchers have validated that social integration is important to African American women's doctoral persistence (Felder et al., 2014; Morris, 2008). As a final point, several of the women depended on their spirituality and religious beliefs as a means to persist when with challenges in their doctoral degree pursuit. Research supports that African American women graduate students

commonly rely on their spirituality or religious beliefs for emotional support (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2008; Morris, 2008).

Summary

The findings in this study responded to the research question: What are the lived experiences of working-class African American women students in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs? Focusing on factors that influenced their doctoral persistence, the three themes helped to convey how a working-class status influenced the participants' perceptions of themselves, their families of origin, and overall doctoral education experience at PWIs. The findings lend support to the assumptions of the SCWM, in that a person's social class experiences are deeply internalized and have a lasting influence on the individual's patterns of beliefs, values, and behaviors (Liu et al., 2004).

The themes make it clear that a working-class status was meaningful in the lives of the participants. The women's working-class identity manifested in their values, attitudes, and actions. Being from a working-class background contributed to the development of specific working-class virtues that aided educational success. The possession of an ingrained work ethic was an invaluable virtue that helped the women sustain the rigors of doctoral study. The women's high level of confidence in themselves and their academic abilities was an attitude and belief that helped them to persevere through challenges faced while pursuing their degree. The women in this study utilized their families, doctoral advisors, peers, and their religion and spirituality as sources of support that promoted doctoral persistence. Cultural and social capital were valued and acknowledged as a means for doctoral persistence. As a whole, the three themes revealed that women did not view their working-class status as a disadvantage. Rather, my interpretations of the data lead me to believe that having working-class origins equipped

participants with additional tools and innate abilities that contributed to their educational success and persistence. The women's perceptions of their working-class status resemble hooks' (1990) assertion that having marginal social locations may not be something that "one wishes to lose, to give up or surrender…but rather of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist" (p. 149).

Boundaries of the Study

This study explored the lived experiences of 10 African American women students who identified as working-class in counselor education Ph.D. programs at PWIs. The goal of phenomenological qualitative research is to reach an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon using relatively few participants who experience a similar condition (Seidman, 2013; Vagle, 2014). The experiences of the 10 women sampled in this study may not reflect the experiences of all working-class African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at PWIs. However, the participants were selected from a range of schools in different regions of the United States. The consistency of the data revealed that several of their doctoral education experiences at PWIs were similar. Thus, it is possible that the findings from this study are transferable to the experiences of other working-class African American women doctoral students at PWIs.

Participants were recruited from CACREP accredited Ph.D. programs only. Accordingly, this study did not capture the experiences of working-class African American women students enrolled in doctor of education (i.e., Ed.D.) programs and Ph.D. programs not accredited by CACREP. The variations in programmatic structures and doctoral program standards in doctoral programs not accredited by CACREP and other degree programs may have a different influence on the educational experiences of working-class African American women students.

My personal experiences as a working-class African American woman made in-depth understandings and interpretations of the phenomenon possible in this hermeneutic phenomenological study (Collins, 2009; Gadamer, 2004). Nonetheless, researchers have suggested that researcher bias may influence the findings of qualitative studies (Kline, 2008; Morrow, 2005). I accounted for personal biases that may have influenced the findings of the study by bridling, remaining close to the data, member checking, and peer debriefing.

Finally, while I attempted to create an environment of mutuality and trust by sharing details of my experiences as a working-class academic, it is possible that my presence during data gathering could have affected the participants' responses to the interview questions. Discussions related to social class status can be a sensitive topic (Barratt, 2011; hooks, 2000). It was evident from my observations of the participants' body language during the interviews that some participants did not feel completely comfortable discussing their personal experiences with economic disadvantage. Thus, the two-phase interviews may not have captured the full spectrum of their educational experiences as working-class academics. Having additional opportunities to build trust and rapport in the researcher-participant relationship may have enhanced the findings of the study.

Implications

Working-class African American women serve the counseling profession greatly, as this study has provided evidence that they have a dynamic understanding of the experiences of persons from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Working-class African American women counseling professionals may be able to develop unique therapeutic and educational interventions to accommodate the complex needs of clients and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs should implement

practices to meet the needs of working-class African American women students to ensure that

they remain enrolled and graduate with quality training and education. Students, program

administrators, counselor educators, and other stakeholders should carefully determine the

applicability of the following implications and consider how the implications may help to

support the educational success of working-class African American women doctoral students.

Representation of Students and Faculty from Economically Disadvantaged Backgrounds

According to the CACREP standards (2009), accredited counselor education programs

should make "systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to

create and support an inclusive learning community" (p. 5). Recruiting and admitting a diverse

body of students in doctoral level education at PWIs, especially students of color that have

experienced economic disadvantage, may help working-class African American women establish

supportive academic networks. The presence of more students of color from working-class

backgrounds may also broaden discussion topics and promote a sense of belonging for working-

class African American women students in doctoral level education. Programs may consider

sending flyers with program information to minority and working-class student organizations.

Recruiting faculty of color from economically disadvantaged backgrounds could support

the doctoral persistence of working-class African American women doctoral students. Faculty

members from the working-class may have an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of

students from working-class backgrounds and the ability to recognize their academic capacities.

Moreover, researchers have identified that faculty from historically marginalized groups are

more likely to broach issues such as classism and racism and are more apt to expose students to

diverse curriculum (Espino, 2012; Gonzalez, 2006; Jones, 2004; Robertson & Mason, 2008;

Solorzano et al., 2000). Faculty members who are familiar with the needs of students from

working-class backgrounds can serve as role models and provide students with proactive support, which may support their doctoral persistence.

Increasing Support and Access

Nine of the women in the study expressed the need to maintain employment while pursuing their doctoral degree. The number of students who are pursuing doctoral degrees while simultaneously maintaining full or part-time employment is rising (Golde, 2005). With the advancement of educational technology, it would be beneficial to offer courses in various modalities that are conducive for employed doctoral students. Programs administrators can consider integrating hybrid formats, online courses, evening classes, or intensive weekend classes.

Policy restrictions that prohibit off-campus employment for doctoral students should be revised. The findings from this study have indicated that off-campus employment may be essential for working-class African American women students' financial stability. Furthermore, if counselor education programs endeavor to educate and train diverse students (e.g., representing diverse genders, ages, or possessing specific counseling skills and knowledge bases), program administrators should consider offering part-time enrollment options to increase access to doctoral level education. Counselor education programs that only allow full-time enrollment options may limit access to doctoral degrees for working-class African American women students.

Culturally Sensitive Pedagogy

Many of the working-class students in the present study were not afforded auxiliary academic resources that could have better prepared them for the rigors of doctoral study. Counselor educators should consider adopting pedagogy and teaching practices that will

optimize learning for doctoral students from working-class backgrounds. For example, developmental approaches to teaching validate the knowledge and capabilities of students from economically disadvantaged groups (Rendón-Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Adopting culturally sensitive pedagogy and practice may relieve working-class African American women doctoral students from the need to "go above and beyond" to prove their academic competency, thus leaving more time to devote to learning (Banks, 2009).

Furthermore, offering a diverse curriculum is a way that counselor education programs can ensure that working-class students are exposed to content that reflects their life experiences. Program administrators and faculty can design elective courses that specifically address working-class histories and class stratification and facilitate connections between students' personal histories and course content (Jones, 2004; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993).

Social and Academic Integration

Some participants indicated that being part of a cohort helped them to elicit peer support, which positively influenced their doctoral persistence. Researchers have stressed the influence that social and academic integration has on doctoral persistence (Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Tinto, 1993; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). Researchers have suggested that cohort models foster communication, cohesiveness, and social and emotional support (Weidman et al., 2001). Counselor education doctoral programs may consider utilizing the cohort model to foster social and academic integration for working-class African American women students. Programs that are not able to implement the cohort model can still foster connections among working-class African American women doctoral students by holding social events both on and off campus that provide students an opportunity to get to acquainted with students from similar racial/ethnic groups or social class backgrounds. Students can foster connections with each other through

social media (e.g., Facebook, GroupMe), which will provide the opportunity for employed students who spend less time on campus to connect with their classmates. Working-class African American women students may consider establishing working-class student groups or seeking informal mentorship from more advanced peers from working-class backgrounds. Connecting with individuals that share similar life experiences may help legitimize student's perspectives and doctoral experiences.

Counselor education doctoral programs should consider holding new student orientations to ensure that working-class African American women students are familiar with the doctoral environment. Lovitts (2001) suggested that developing cognitive maps at new student orientations might be useful to students who are unfamiliar with graduate level education. A cognitive map is a structured outline detailing the graduate program that may include information related to program expectations, yearly requirements, assistantships, events, and people affiliated with the program (Holley & Joseph, 2013; Lovitts, 2001). Cognitive maps assist students in understanding the idiosyncrasies of graduate education. Cognitive maps may benefit working-class African American women students by helping them to understand the doctoral process, increasing their awareness of resources, and familiarizing them with the expectations of doctoral level education (e.g., time commitment, mentorship programs, funding sources, employment restrictions). Inviting representatives from various student support services and campus organizations to new student orientation (e.g., graduate student organizations, psychological services, multicultural services and programs) may benefit students who may need to establish personal and academic support systems outside of their department.

Finally, within-group mentoring (e.g., same race and gender) may provide working-class African American women with additional support and empowerment (Grant, 2012). Cross-

cultural faculty mentorships may also benefit working-class African American women doctoral students, particularly if mentors are culturally sensitive and cognizant of areas in which working-class students may need additional personal and academic support. Faculty mentors may enhance working-class African American women students' professional development and academic involvement by inviting them to participate on research teams or to co-present at professional conferences. Faculty mentors can also help connect the students with various funding sources (e.g., fellowships, assistantships) that can assuage financial strain.

Student-Program Match

Working-class African American women who plan to pursue doctoral degrees in counselor education at PWIs should take proactive measures that will promote successful doctoral persistence. Students should thoroughly research programs of interest to ensure student-program match (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005). Based on the findings of this study, working-class African American women could consider the following factors to determine which programs best fit their personal and academic needs: (a) availability of funding, (b) part-time enrollment options, (c) variable course delivery modalities, (d) employment restrictions, (e) diverse curriculum, (f) student and faculty diversity, and (g) emphasis on social justice and multiculturalism.

Challenging Classism

The majority of the participants experienced classism in university settings. Classism represents a type of discrimination based on social class where people with lower socioeconomic statuses are treated in ways that serve to exclude, devalue, and discount their needs and experiences (Langhout et al., 2009). Participants reported that counselor educators and their peers were often insensitive or antagonistic when topics related to economic disadvantage were

broached in classroom discussions. Classism may shape counseling professionals' (or counseling students) feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and lead to discriminatory treatment of persons from low socioeconomic groups. Both counselor educators and counselors-in-training must continuously evaluate their personal biases and become cognizant of how classism influences their interactions with individuals that they encounter. An effective way to counter classism in the academic setting is to recognize and acknowledge the strengths that working-class students possess and value the knowledge that they bring into the classroom. Attending professional development workshops that address culturally competent practices is an additional way that counseling professionals can receive training on challenging classist behaviors and beliefs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Literature related to the experiences of working-class African American women in doctoral level education is limited. The trends on enrollment indicate that African American women comprise one of the largest groups of students of color enrolled in graduate degree programs (Gonzales et al., 2013). While no reports have identified the specific demographics of this subpopulation of students, it is likely that some of these African American women are from working-class backgrounds. Thus, it is essential to expand the research that examines the experiences of working-class African American women graduate students. An expansion of empirical research on this group of students will help institutions to devise policies and practices that support their educational success. Researchers can expand the literature by conducting a range of qualitative studies to explore how a working-class status intersects with other identities (e.g., parental status, religion, sexual orientation, geographic origin, partner status) and influences the experiences of African American women students in doctoral level education.

The current study did not focus solely on the experiences of working-class African American doctoral students who were the first in their families to attend college, although eight participants were first generation college students. Low income, first-generation college students experience additional challenges related to unfamiliarity with the collegiate process and having fewer role models to help them navigate academic environments (Rendón-Linares & Muñoz, 2011). To date, most of the research on low-income African American women first generation college students at PWIs has focused on their undergraduate experiences. There is a need to conduct research that focuses exclusively on the doctoral experiences of working-class African American women at PWIs who are the first in their families to attend college. Such research could provide insight related to their specific needs and help graduate program administrators understand factors that support their educational success.

There is a need for discipline specific research (Baird, 1990) to determine if classism is present across various academic disciplines. Few studies have examined the experiences of working-class African American women doctoral students enrolled in other disciplines, especially in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics fields (STEM). Working-class African American women in STEM disciplines may face unique challenges that are distinct from challenges faced by White women and men of color, who are also underrepresented in the STEM fields (Joseph, 2012).

Furthermore, researchers should examine the educational experiences of working-class students across all levels of education (e.g., P-16, master's level) (Carter, 2003; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Ostrove et al., 2011; Rubin, 2014). Prior research has shown that many working-class students who graduate with a bachelor's degree do not enroll in advanced-degree programs (Perna, 2010; Perna & Jones, 2013), and working-class students who choose to pursue master's

degrees report low aspirations of attaining a Ph.D. degree (Walpole, 2003). More research is needed to examine the real and perceived barriers that interfere with working-class students' enrollment in advanced degree programs. Such research will increase an understanding of how administrators and educators can better support working-class students' academic success and matriculation in all levels of education.

Last, many of the participants in the current study noted that there was a discrepancy between the stated mission of their programs and the actual practices in regards to valuing diversity and multiculturalism, especially related to social class. While social class is an important concept, the recognition of social class as an important component of multiculturalism in counseling is developing slowly (Liu et al., 2004). Studies are needed to evaluate whether counselor educators are comfortable with and effective in teaching topics related to social class and classism. Researchers could use surveys and focus groups to investigate if counselor educators recognize social class as an important component of cultural identity and how often topics related to economic disadvantage are reflected in counselor education curriculum.

Conclusion

The current study adds to the body of knowledge related to working-class African American women and counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs. Working-class African American women have an abundance of cultural wealth. The women possessed inherent virtues and strengths that helped them to overcome economic hardships and other obstacles that could have hindered their personal development and educational success. The women in this study faced classism, racism, and other forms oppression as they navigated various levels of education; nevertheless, they remained confident in their abilities as they endeavored to pursue their doctorate. By participating in this research study, the women created new knowledge related to

their experiences and the factors that influenced their doctoral persistence in counselor education programs at PWIs. The women illustrated how working-class virtues, self-efficacy and resiliency, and the utilization of personal and academic support systems served to support their doctoral persistence in predominantly White middle and upper class environments.

While working-class virtues, compensatory behavior, and a sound determination to succeed helped the working-class African American women doctoral students persist in this study, more vulnerable students may respond by leaving their doctorate programs prematurely. It is my hope that the findings of this study have provided an understanding of how working-class African American women can lean on their cultural strengths and ingenuities as a means to persist in doctoral level education at PWIs. Additionally, my hope is that program administrators and other stakeholders will use the findings to address issues of classism, racism, and sexism and implement policies to ensure that the doctoral climate is welcoming and supportive of working-class African American women students.

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Appendix A

Approval of Study

The University of Georgia

Office of the Vice President for Research
Institutional Review Board

**APPROVAL OF
PROTOCOL**

November 4, 2014

Dear Laura Dean:

On 11/4/2014, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	A Phenomenological Investigation of the Experiences of Working-Class African American Women Doctoral Students in Counselor Education
Investigator:	Laura Dean
IRB ID:	STUDY00001540
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

The IRB approved the protocol from 11/4/2014.

To document consent, use the consent documents that were approved and stamped by the IRB. Go to the Documents tab to download them.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,
Larry Nackerud Ph.D.
University of Georgia
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

Appendix B

List of CACREP accredited Ph.D. programs at predominantly White institutions

State	School	Degree	Contact
1. SC	University of South Carolina	Ph.D.	Dr. Joshua Gold josgold@mailbox.sc.edu
2. FL	Florida Atlantic University	Ph.D.	Dr. Paul Peluso ppeluso@fau.edu
3. TX	Sam Houston State University	Ph.D.	Dr. Richard Henriksen rch008@shsu.edu
4. VA	Old Dominion University	Ph.D.	Dr. Tim Grothaus tgrothau@odu.edu
5. VA	College of William and Mary	Ph.D.	Dr. Victoria Foster vafost@wm.edu
6. SD	University of South Dakota	Ph.D.	Dr. Seth Olson Seth.Olson@usd.edu
7. OH	University of Akron	Ph.D.	Dr. Robert Schwartz rcs@uakron.edu
8. NC	North Carolina State University	Ph.D.	Dr. Sylvia Nassar-McMillan snassar@ncsu.edu
9. MD	Loyola University Maryland-Columbia	Ph.D.	Dr. Mickey Fenzel LFenzel@loyola.edu
10. KS	Kansas State University	Ph.D.	Dr. Judy Hughey jhughey@k-state.edu
11. VA	Virginia Polytechnical Institute and State University	Ph.D.	Dr. Gerard Lawson glawson@vt.edu
12. WY	University of Wyoming	Ph.D.	Dr. Kent Becker kwbecker@uwyo.edu
13. OH	University of Toledo	Ph.D.	Nick Piazza, PhD nick.piazza@utoledo.edu
14. CO	University of Northern Colorado	Ph.D.	Dr. Jennifer Murdock, PhD, LPC jennifer.murdock@unco.edu
15. TX	University of North Texas	Ph.D.	Dr. Janice Holden jan.holden@unt.edu
16. LA	University of New Orleans	Ph.D.	Roxane Dufrene, Ph.D. rdufren1@uno.edu
17. FL	University of Central Florida	Ph.D.	W. Bryce Hagedorn, Ph.D. Bryce.Hagedorn@ucf.edu

18. AR	University of Arkansas	Ph.D.	Kristin K. Higgins, Ph.D. kkhiggi@uark.edu
19. TX	Texas Tech University	Ph.D.	Dr. Loretta J. Bradley loretta.bradley@ttu.edu
20. PA	Pennsylvania State University	Ph.D.	JoLynn V. Carney, Ph.D. jcarney@psu.edu
21. OR	Oregon State University	Ph.D.	Dr. Amy Ford, amy.ford@osucascades.edu
22. OH	Ohio University	Ph.D.	Christine Suniti Bhat, Ph.D. bhatc@ohio.edu
23. ND	North Dakota State University	Ph.D.	Jill R. Nelson, Ph.D. Jill.R.Nelson@ndsu.edu
24. OH	Kent State University	Ph.D.	Jane Cox, Ph.D. jcox8@kent.edu
25. ID	Idaho State University	Ph.D.	Dr. David Kleist kleidavi@isu.edu
26. GA	Georgia State University	Ph.D.	Dr. Catherine Chang cychang@gsu.edu
27. PA	Duquesne University	Ph.D.	Dr. Olga M. Welch, Ed.D. welcho@duq.edu
28. DC	George Washington University	Ph.D.	Dr. Sam Steen slsteen@gwu.edu
29. MS	Mississippi State University	Ph.D.	Dr. Joan Looby jlooby@colled.msstate.edu
30. MI	Oakland University	Ph.D.	Dr. Lisa Hawley hawley@oakland.edu
31. IL	Southern Illinois University	Ph.D.	Dr. Kimberly K. Asner-Self kasner@siu.edu.
32. TX	St. Mary's University	Ph.D.	Dr. Julie Strentzsch jstrentzsch@stmarytx.edu
33. TX	Texas A & M University - Commerce	Ph.D.	Dr. Chester Robinson *Chester.robinson*@tamuc.edu
34. IA	University of Iowa, The	Ph.D.	Dr. Nicholas Colangelo nick-colangelo@uiowa.edu
35. NC	University of North Carolina at Charlotte	Ph.D.	Dr. Lyndon P. Abrams lpabrams@uncc.edu
36. NC	University of North Carolina at Greensboro	Ph.D.	Dr. Craig Cashwell cscashwe@uncg.edu
37. MI	Western Michigan University	Ph.D.	Stephen E. Craig , Ph.D. stephen.craig@wmich.edu
38. FL	Barry University	Ph.D.	Karen Shatz, PhD kshatz@barry.edu
39. GA	University of Georgia	Ph.D.	Dr. Anneliese Singh asingh@uga.edu

40. MS	University of Mississippi	Ph.D.	Dr. Amy Wells Dolan aewells@olemiss.edu
41. TN	University of Tennessee at Knoxville	Ph.D.	Melinda Gibbons, Ph.D. mgibbon2@utk.edu
42. TX	University of Texas at San Antonio	Ph.D.	Dr. Shane Haberstroh, shane.haberstroh@utsa.edu
43. TX	Texas A & M University - Corpus Christi	Ph.D.	Dr. Robert Smith robert.smith@tamucc.edu
44. NY	Syracuse University	Ph.D.	Dr. Nicole Hill nrhill@syr.edu
45. FL	University of Florida	Ed.D./Ph.D.	Dr. Ellen Amatea eamatea@coe.ufl.edu
46. AL	University of Alabama	Ed.D./Ph.D.	Dr. Joy J. Burnham jburnham@bamaed.ua.edu
47. AL	Auburn University	Ed.D./Ph.D.	Dr. Jamie Carney carnejs@auburn.edu
48. NV	University of Nevada Reno	Ed.D./Ph.D.	Brenda Freeman, Ph.D. brendafreeman@unr.edu
49. MI	Wayne State University	Ed.D./Ph.D.	JoAnne Holbert jholbert@wayne.edu
50. NY	University of Rochester	Ed.D./Ph.D.	Dr. Kathryn Douthit kdouthit@warner.rochester.edu
51. MO	University of Missouri - St. Louis	Ed.D./Ph.D.	Dr. K. Haywood Kathleen_Haywood@umsl.edu

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

Greetings,

I am Lonika Crumb, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia. I am completing my dissertation research study under the direction of Dr. Laura Dean. My topic is: *A Phenomenological Investigation of the Experiences of Working-Class African American Women Doctoral Students in Counselor Education.*
The purpose of this dissertation research study is to develop an in-depth understanding of how a working-class social class status influences the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at predominantly White institutions. Research participants will complete a brief demographic questionnaire and participate in two audio recorded 60-90 minute individual qualitative interviews that can be conducted face-to-face or using video communication technology. My hope is that this research will contribute to the literature on African American women's experiences in counselor education Ph.D. programs. The IRB of University of Georgia has approved this study (IRB ID: STUDY00001540).

Criteria for eligibility:

1) Identify as an African American/Black female
2) Current enrollment in a CACREP accredited Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D. Program at a predominantly White institution
3) Identify background social class status as working-class or other terms used to signify economic disadvantage (e.g., lower/under-class, low-income, poor, or economically disadvantaged)

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Please contact me for more information: Lonika Crumb, Lcrumb@uga.edu or 252.917.0475. **Please distribute this email to students that might be interested in participating in this study.** Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Lonika Crumb, Co-Investigator
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
Doctoral Candidate, The University of Georgia

Dr. Laura Dean, Principal Investigator
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
The University of Georgia
Phone: 706-542-1812
Email: ladean@uga.edu

Appendix D

Recruitment Flyer

A Phenomenological Investigation of the Experiences of Working-Class African American
Women Doctoral Students in Counselor Education

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS FOR A DISSERTATATION RESEARCH STUDY ON:

Working-class African American women who are pursuing a Ph.D. in counselor education

If you are an African American woman from an economically disadvantaged background and are currently enrolled in a counselor education and supervision Ph.D. program at a predominantly White institution, you are invited to share your personal experiences in a research study! The purpose of this qualitative research study is to develop an in-depth understanding of how a working-class social class status influences the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at predominantly White institutions. Sharing your doctoral education experiences may help other doctoral students with similar identities successfully navigate their programs and provide information that will help faculty and administrators develop comprehensive programs. Respondents who meet the study criteria will complete a brief demographic questionnaire and participate in two audio-recorded 60-90 minute individual qualitative interviews that will be conducted face-to-face or through video communication technology.

Criteria for eligibility:
1) Identify as an African American/Black female
2) Current enrollment in a CACREP accredited Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D. Program at a predominantly White institution
3) Identify background social class status as working-class or other terms used to signify economic disadvantage (e.g., lower/under-class, low-income, poor, or economically disadvantaged.

If you are interested in this study, please contact: Lonika Crumb at Lcrumb@uga.edu or 252.917.0475. Participation is this research study is voluntary.

Lonika Crumb, Co-Investigator
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
The University of Georgia
Phone: 252-917-0475
Email: lcrumb@uga.edu

Dr. Laura Dean, Principal Investigator
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
The University of Georgia
Phone: 706-542-1812
Email: ladean@uga.edu

Appendix E

Telephone Eligibility Screening Script

Thank you for calling to find out more about my dissertation research study: *A Phenomenological Investigation of the Experiences of Working-Class African American Women Doctoral Students in Counselor Education.* I am Lonika Crumb, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. The purpose of this research study is to develop an in-depth understanding of how a working-class social class status influences the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at predominantly White institutions. I hope that the study will help advance an understanding of the impact social class status has on the doctoral education experiences of African American women in counselor education programs. Do you think you might be interested in participating in this research study?

[If No]: Okay. Thank you for your time.

[If Yes]: Before enrolling people in this study, I need to ask you some questions to determine if you are eligible to participate. I would like to ask you a series of questions about your race/ethnicity, gender, school, and social class status. This should only take about 15 minutes. At the end, I will tell you if you qualify or not to participate in the research study. If you do not qualify, all the information you provided will be destroyed immediately.

It is possible that some of these questions may make you uncomfortable, please inform me if you experience any discomfort when responding to the questions. You may decline to answer any questions.

All information that you provide, including your name, phone number, email address, or any other identifiers, will be strictly confidential and will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Your participation in this phone interview is voluntary. You can stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Do I have your permission to ask you some questions? _____

1. Do you identify as an African American/Black female? _____
2. Are you currently enrolled in a CACREP accredited Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D. program at a predominantly White institution? _____
3. Do you identify your background social class status as working-class or other terms used to signify economic disadvantage (e.g., lower/under-class, low-income, poor, or economically disadvantaged)? _____

[If No to any]: I am sorry. You do not meet the inclusion criteria for the study. Any information that you provided will be destroyed.

[If Yes to all]: You have met the preliminary inclusion criteria to participate in this research study. I will now ask that you provide an email address and I will email you a brief demographic questionnaire to make a final determination of your eligibility to participate in the study.
I also ask that your provide a pseudonym that will be used to replace your name to protect your confidentiality.
Pseudonym_____

Thank you. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me: Lonika Crumb at 252.917.0475 or contact my doctoral advisor Dr. Laura Dean at 706-542-1812. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to Institutional Review Board, 609 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Adapted from The University of Georgia's Telephone Eligibility Consent Screening Script: https://research.uga.edu/documents/

Appendix F

Demographic Questionnaire

A Phenomenological Investigation of the Experiences of Working-Class African American Women Doctoral Students in Counselor Education

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather basic information related to your personal background to determine if you meet the criteria to participate in this dissertation research study. My goal is to develop an in-depth understanding of how a working-class social class status influences the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs. Thus, some of the questions will ask you to provide details related to your financial aid status in your undergraduate studies, and parents/caregiver's background which are typical objective indicators of social class status. **You may decline to answer any question.**

Criteria for eligibility:

1) Identify as an African American/Black female
2) Current enrollment in a CACREP accredited Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D. Program at a predominantly White institution
3) Identify background social class status as working-class or other terms used to signify economic disadvantage (e.g., lower/under-class, low-income, poor, or economically disadvantaged)

If you meet all of the criteria stated above, I would like you to participate in my study! The items below will request additional information to ensure that you meet the inclusion criteria.

Directions: Please fill in the blanks below.

Full name: _____   Please identify a pseudonym: _____

1. Gender: _____
2. Race and/or ethnicity:_____
3. Are you currently pursuing your Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision? _____
4. Institution name:_____
5. Are you enrolled part-time or full time? _____
6. Are you currently employed? _____
7. Do you consider your background class status as lower/working class, middle class, or upper class? _____
8. Did you receive the Pell Grant or any other form of need-based financial aid in undergraduate studies? _____
9. What was your parents/primary caregiver's occupation? _____
10. What was your parents/primary caregiver's highest level of education? _____

Thank you! Please email your completed questionnaire to Lonika Crumb at: Lcrumb@uga.edu.

Appendix G

Consent Form

**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
CONSENT
FORM**

A Phenomenological Investigation of the Experiences of Working-Class African
American Women Doctoral Students in Counselor Education

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

Principal Investigator: Dr. Laura Dean
                        Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
                        Phone: 706-542-1812
                        Email: ladean@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this qualitative study is to develop an in-depth understanding of how a
working- class social class status influences the educational experiences of African
American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at
predominantly White institutions. A major focus of this study is to capture the lived
experiences of African American women doctoral students who identify as working-
class. Few researchers have directly examined the influence that social class has the
doctoral education experiences of African American women in counselor education

programs. I seek to gain insight on the academic, social, and emotional experiences of working-class African American women doctoral students. I also aim to examine the positive academic experiences of African American women Ph.D. students and what factors influence their educational success.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you have self-identified as an African American/Black female from a working-class background who is currently enrolled in a Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredited counselor education and supervision Ph.D. program at a predominantly White institution.

Study Procedures
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to …

- Respond to a telephone eligibility screening
- Complete and return a brief demographic questionnaire to gather basic information related to your personal background to ensure that you meet all inclusion criteria. The demographic questionnaire will ask you to provide information such as your gender, race/ethnicity, school, background social class status, parents/caregiver's social class status, and parents/caregiver's occupation.
- Participate in two audio-recorded individual face-to-face or video interviews that will last approximately 60-90 minutes. I will schedule the interviews at a time, date, and location that is convenient for you. The interviews will be scheduled approximately one week apart.
- If we are not able to have individual face-to-face interviews, the interviews will be conducted using video communication technology. Video interviews permit audio and visual engagement. I will use my personal computer at my home office to conduct video interviews.
- Total duration of research study is approximately 6-7 months (November 2014 – April/May 2015)

   Number of contacts anticipated: 5
   o 1 phone contact to initiate screening for eligibility. If you meet the eligibility criteria, the consent form and demographic questionnaire will be distributed via email (Length of contact: 30 minutes)
   o 1 contact to complete interview one (Length of visit or video contact: 60-90 minutes)
   o 1 contact to complete interview two (Length of visit or video contact: 60-90 minutes)
   o 1 contact for member checking to ensure accuracy of the data (Length of contact: 45 minutes)
   o 1 contact to discuss final report (Length of contact: 30 minutes)

Risks and discomforts

As a participant, you may experience slight psychological or physical discomfort when sharing experiences related to your educational experiences, family background, and social standing. No other risks are anticipated. If you become uncomfortable responding to any questions, you may decline to answer and I will proceed to the next question. You are not required to answer every question. At anytime, you may end the interview or withdraw your consent to participate in the study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you experience adverse psychological reactions to the research study, please contact me and I will help you locate resources or contact Behavior Health Link at 1-800-715-4225. Behavior Health Link is able to help you locate psychological services and other resources in your area. I am not responsible for any charges that you may accumulate from the use of health care providers.

Benefits
- There are no known benefits of this study; however you may feel empowered to have the opportunity to share your doctoral educational experiences with other women who share similar identities.
- Participation in this study may benefit scientific knowledge by helping people to understand the influence that a working-class status has on students' experiences in doctoral level education. The information from this study could help university administrators and faculty design effective doctoral programs that attract a diverse body of students.

Incentives for participation
There is no incentive (monetary or non-monetary) for participating in the research study.

Audio/Video Recording
Interview one and interview two (face-to-face and video interviews) will be audio recorded by the researcher using a digital recorder. Recording the interviews allows the researcher to focuson the information shared in the interview and capture the complete content of the interviews. An audio recording is required in order to transcribe the interviews for later data analysis. All audio recorded interviews will be stored on a removable hardware device that will be locked in my personal file cabinet. I will use your pseudonym to reference your audio recorded interviews. The audio recorded interviews will be destroyed (erased) from the removable hardware device after the transcription is completed.

Privacy/Confidentiality
I will strive to protect your privacy/confidentiality throughout the duration of the research study. You will be asked to identify your full name on one document: the demographic questionnaire. I will also ask that you provide your phone number and email address in order to arrange interviews and to participate in the data analysis process (member checking). On the telephone eligibility screening form and demographic questionnaire you will have the chance to choose a pseudonym, which will be used thereafter to maintain confidentiality when your information is referenced during the study. I will remove any identifiers from the transcription

document. If I use direct quotes from your interview in the final report or in any publication, I will alter any information that could identify the quotations as yours. All documents (e.g., telephone eligibility screening form, demographic questionnaire, consent form, transcriptions, codebook) will be stored on a removable hardware device that will be locked in my personal file cabinet.

I would like to acknowledge that internet communication is not completely secure, thus there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed when transmitting information over the
internet. However, I will employ the standard confidentiality procedures. I will utilize firewall technology that will protect my computer from unauthorized access and my computer, email, and documents will be password protected. All emails, transcripts, or any other written communication you provide during the duration of the study will be destroyed after completion
of the study, which is anticipated to be between April and May 2015. The code key that contains your identifiable information will be kept in a locked file cabinet, in a locked room maintained by the co-investigator and will be destroyed three years after the study has been completed. Two research team members will review the data in the data analysis process. No identifiable information will be used or shared during data analysis. Your identified pseudonym will be used to reference your information. My doctoral advisor, Dr. Laura Dean, may also review the data in the data analysis process. I will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone without your written consent, unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary
Your involvement in this study is strictly voluntary. At anytime, you may choose not to participate or withdraw from the study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Dr. Laura Dean, a professor at the University of Georgia. The co-investigator is Lonika Crumb, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. If you have questions, you may contact Dr. Laura Dean at 706-542-1812 or Lonika Crumb at Lcrumb@uga.edu or at 252.917.0475. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
By completing and returning the demographic questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Please keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

Adapted from The University of Georgia's consent form: https://research.uga.edu/documents/

Appendix H

Interview Protocol

Hello. Thank you for your participation in my study.

I am Lonika Crumb, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia in the Counseling and Student Personnel Services Ph.D. program. The purpose of this dissertation research study is to develop an in-depth understanding of how a working-class social class status influences the educational experiences of African American women doctoral students in counselor education programs at predominantly White institutions. My personal experiences of navigating educational settings as an African American female from a working-class family prompted my interest in exploring the educational experiences of African American women students from low-income backgrounds. Throughout this research study, I will be open to sharing some of my lived experiences with you.

I would like to interview you regarding your experiences as an African American woman doctoral student from a working-class background. I will ask you a series of questions regarding your personal background and experiences in your doctoral program. I will also ask you to share various factors that influence your persistence in doctoral study. I may use probing questions such as "can you give me an example, tell me more, what was that like for you" to help you expand your responses.

I will refer to you by the pseudonym that you provided on the demographic questionnaire. All information discussed in the interview will be kept confidential. I anticipate that the first and second interview will each last approximately 60-90 minutes. I will audiotape our interview and write notes in my field notebook. The full interview will be transcribed and I will provide you a copy for your review. At any time, you may decline to answer a question, choose to end the interview, or withdraw from the study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Do you need me to clarify any additional information related to the study?
Do you have any questions before we start the interview?
Do I have your permission to audio-record the interviews?

I will now start recording.

RQ: What are the lived experiences of working-class African American women students in counselor education doctoral programs at PWIs?

Interview One questions:
1. Tell me about yourself.
   a. Family background

2. What makes you identify with a working-class status?

3. What does being from a working-class or economically disadvantaged background mean to you? Probe: how is this social class status/identity significant in your life?

4. Who or what influenced you to pursue a Ph.D. in counselor education?

5. How does your identity as an African American woman from the working-class impact your doctoral education experiences at a PWI? Probe- Can you share some specific experiences?

6. How comfortable are you with discussing personal experiences related to your working-class status in the academic setting? (e.g., with peers or faculty)

Interview Two questions:
1. Please share anything that stood out from the first interview.
   a. Would you like to discuss any reflections or remembrances that you have had since the first interview?

2. Do you think that your educational experiences are different from your peers in your program because of your class status? If yes, how?

3. Thus far, we have discussed your working-class identity. Tell me about any other identities that are significant to you (e.g., race, gender, parental, religion, spousal, sexual).
  a. Please share how the identities influence your experiences in doctoral education?

4. What factors and/or experiences have contributed to your doctoral persistence/educational success?
a. Personal factors?
b. Institutional factors?
   a. What else is needed

5. What keeps you motivated toward doctoral degree completion?
a. Significant positive experiences?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share about being an African American woman from a working-class background or about experiences in your doctoral program?