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The Experiences of Black MFT Doctoral Degree Holders with White Professors: A Phenomenological Study

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The Experiences of Black MFT Doctoral Degree Holders with
White Professors: A Phenomenological Study

By

Juliana M. Deans

A Dissertation Proposal presented to the
Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University

2015

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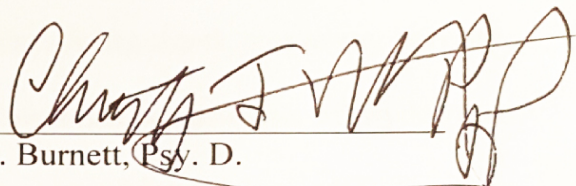
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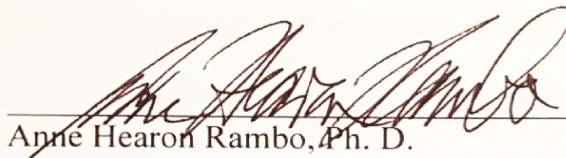
Nova Southeastern University
Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences

This dissertation was submitted by Juliana M. Deans under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Philosophy in the Department of Family Therapy at Nova Southeastern University.

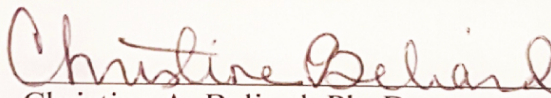
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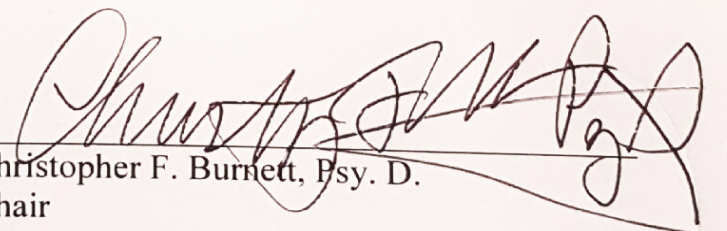


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Date of Final Approval



Christopher F. Burnett, Psy. D.
Chair

DEDICATIONS

First and foremost, I want to thank God who has given me the tenacity, knowledge, and encouragement in my pursuit as a doctoral candidate. I want to dedicate this dissertation to my son, Myles, who entered into this world halfway through my doctoral journey and continues to be a curious, animated, affectionate, energetic, and precocious little man. You bring so much joy to my life in your ability to make me laugh daily. I also dedicate this to my husband, Derrek, who remained by my side as I pursued this degree and who has encouraged me along the way. A big thank you to my parents who demonstrated insatiable love of learning. My father has become one of my biggest cheerleaders. Moreover, I want to dedicate this to my sister Maudeleine, who was a source of motivation throughout this journey and continues to be one of my favorite people in life. Finally, I dedicate this work to the countless friends who have been by my side. Special shoutouts to Harriet, Babette, Sasheika, Nirva, Yolle, Charmaine, Jackie, Cherrie, Sherrifa, Aleyah, and Terry who cheered me on and celebrated every little triumph in the process. We were created to be social beings and I am humbly grateful and blessed to have had an unwavering foundation on which to begin and conclude this adventure.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of Black doctoral degree holders' interactions with their White professors in a Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program. There are a number of studies on the effectiveness of White professors and Black graduate students, but few focus specifically on the field of Marriage and Family Therapy.

This study employed existential phenomenological methodology to examine Black MFT doctoral degree holders' perceptions of their White professors. The experiences of six Black doctoral degree holders who attended COAMFTE-accredited programs were examined. The process involved an in-depth semi-structured interview. The study also revealed five major themes describing the meanings of Black doctoral degree holders' experiences. These five areas of concern were: Perceptions of world: The program; Perception of others: White Professors; Perception of self: Participation; Perception of self: Participants; Implications for Black students; and Implications for White professors.

The study suggests implications for future research on the lives of doctoral students, specifically, Black doctoral students' who are enrolled in marriage and family therapy programs. Recommendations are offered on improving future interactions between Black students and White Professors based on changes by MFT programs, White professors, and Black doctoral students.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

All of my life, I have been taught by White teachers! I am Black. I use the term Black rather than African American because my personal beliefs and attitude about having my cultural background as Haitian, not African (Ferguson, Leach, Levy, Nicholson, and Johnson, 2008). Research by Gallup indicates that there is no preference for using the term "Black" or "African American." Gallup's research as cited in Jones (2013) showed that 65 percent of Blacks and African Americans are indifferent to what term are used to describe their demographic. Seventeen percent preferred African American; seventeen percent preferred Black. Because both terms are acceptable in current literature, they will be used interchangeably throughout this study. As the author prefers to identify myself as Black as explained by Johnson (2008): "Black immigrants, in different epochs and from different origins, come to the United States with well-formed pre-migration, nonracial identities" (p. 92). Based on the aforementioned, Black, instead of African-American, is the preferred term that the writer will use to define racial identity. Similar to defining Black, White is defined as light skinned, usually American or European (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005).

I had Black teachers in Haiti before I came to America at age eight; then two decades passed before I had another teacher who "looked like me." From Haiti I moved to North Dakota, where I attended a public elementary school. Soon after, we moved to Colorado and I attended two additional public elementary schools before entering a private Christian school for middle and high school. I earned an Associate of Arts degree from a public community college. I completed bachelor's and graduate degrees at a private university in South Florida, a region often referred to as a "melting pot," due to the multitude of cultures that constitute the population demographic (Frey, 2002). Next, I enrolled in a doctoral program in the biggest university in

South Florida, which was private. Contrary to what one might expect from a “melting pot,” I had my first Black teacher in a doctoral program in 2009, after eight years of residing and attending universities in South Florida. It was not until the chair of my dissertation encouraged me to do this study that I realized the racial patterns of my teachers. Now, I find myself reflecting on my experience.

There were three Black professors in the MFT program, two women and one man. Firstly, I connected most with the one professor with whom I had the most in common, like myself, she was raised by white parents. Secondly, she was very knowledgeable about interracial adoptions and some of the underlying traits of adoptees, which I found useful since I was working as an Adoption Therapist. Thirdly, we shared similar spiritual beliefs; I now see that professor as an extended family member.

Most of my educational experience was with White teachers or professors. Therefore, it makes sense that I have more connections with them than with Black teachers. My favorite teacher is a White woman from my high school. We had similar beliefs, but we rarely spoke about them. She was interested in people and their lives. She demonstrated her love for her students by trusting us with some of her personal belongings. I remember house sitting, tending her rose garden, and caring for her dog. That responsibility taught me the importance of trusting others.

Another professor dear to me was a White man in my master’s program. I have never met anyone who criticized me with so much love. What truly made this professor special was that he treated each student as his favorite. He would answer emails and calls promptly and professionally. He frequently spoke about his love for teaching and writing. I learned about grace, mercy, kindness, and dedication from him.

The most recent of my "favorite teachers" was a White male from the doctoral program. He enjoyed people, sports, and photography, much like me. If he did not have an answer to my questions, he would direct me to someone who may have had it. He seemed to manage his professional and personal life well. From him I learned about prioritizing, laughing more, and being resourceful. Looking back at my experiences made me curious to learn about the experiences of other Black students with White professors, especially as the rate of Black students in higher education increases.

Background of the Study

The rate of enrollment among Black students in universities increases each year (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Inman, Meza, Brown, & Hargrove, 2004; Miller & Stone, 2011; Naman, 2009; U. S. Census Bureau, 2006a; U. S. Census Bureau, 2006b). There are a significant number of studies debating the effectiveness of white educators teaching Black students (Inman et al., 2004; McDowell, Fang, Brownlee, Young, & Khanna, 2002; Miller & Stone, 2011; Naman, 2009; Wilson & Stith, 1993). Despite the extensive research on White professors and Black students, there has been a noticeable lack of inquiry in the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. McDowell, Fang, Brownlee, Young, Khanna, Sherman, and Brownlee (2002) completed research to raise racial awareness and sensitivity with graduate students in the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) programs. Based on their findings, the authors encourage further research on racial matters impacting MFT students. This research provides doctoral degree holders a platform to voice their experiences with White professors. In turn, it will explore whether differences between students and professors' races play a role in the students' experiences. Another study completed by Taylor, Hernández, Deri, Rankin, & Siegel (2007) recommended that professional organizations and institutions need to enhance supervisory

understandings of multiple diversity dimensions (e.g. race, gender, age, religion) to ensure culturally competent supervisees. With this research focusing on race, it will be useful for both professional organizations and institutions to read about the perceptions of the effect of race on MFT doctoral degree holders.

Between 1999 and 2001, approximately 80% of all MFT students were White (McDowell et al., 2002). Since then, the MFT field accredited with Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education has seen a growing number of Black students in doctoral programs (AAMFT, 2008, Todd & Holden, 2012). However, the percentage of enrolled White and Black MFT students remains constant. The AAMFT and accredited programs, therefore, have been involved in trying to increase diversity (COAMFTE, 2013; Todd & Holden, 2012). Thus the challenge has been to diversify such programs to attract greater levels of student demographic spread.

Some argue that race is unimportant and will instead focus on the importance of the content of one's character rather than the color of one's skin (King, 1968). The benefit of being colorblind is not having to treat people differently because of their race. The colorblind person usually sees all members of society as of equal worth. The colorblind mindset suggests that all races have equal opportunities to succeed. Schofield (2001) stated those with that opinion are denying the individuals their cultural history. Race of individuals may matter because it is required in so many documents that follow the patterns and trends of specific social group. "However, most agree that race remains a relevant and influential concept in determining social organization and privilege, that race does matter, and ideology that supports inequity relies on the perception of racial difference" (McDowell et al., 2002). It remains important to explore perceptions of race and racial difference.

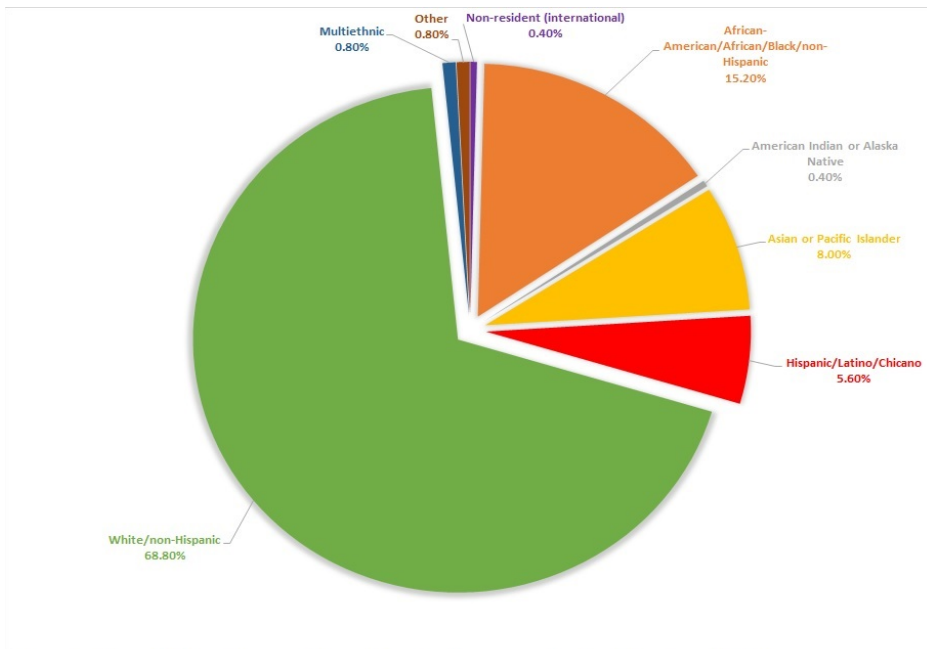
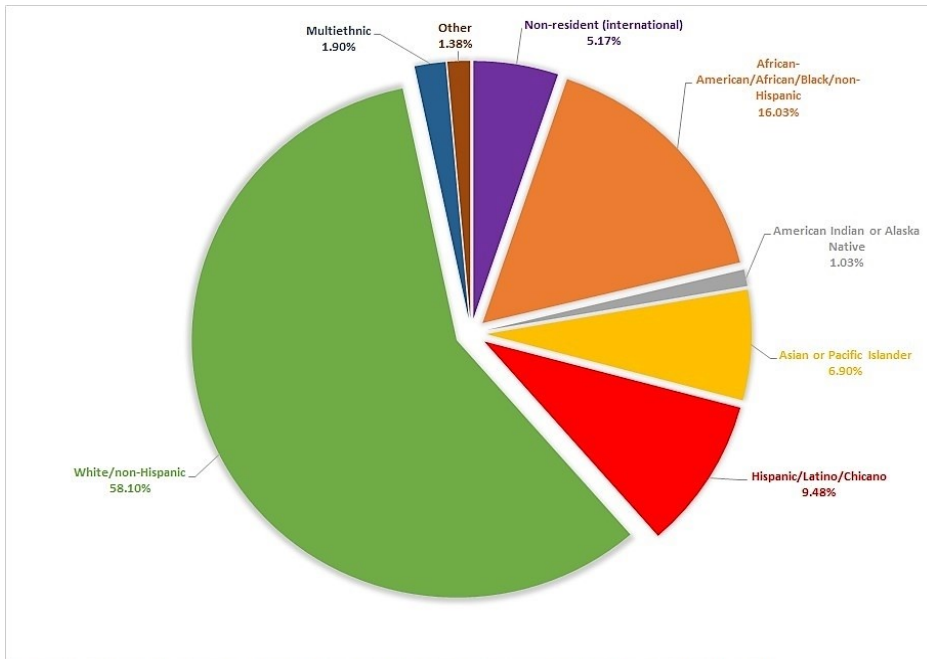
The effect of *Brown v. Board of Education*

Since the 1954 Supreme Court decision (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)) to overturn the 1896 "separate but equal" ruling (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896)), United States schools have attempted to provide the freedom for all individuals to attend the same schools regardless of race. The ruling brought an end to school segregation and white teachers began to teach Black students. Though sixty years have now passed since that decision, and students who lived under *de jure* segregation are mostly—with a few octogenarian exceptions—finished with their educational careers, there persists a point of view that claims even more must be done to "level the playing field," or to racially balance faculty-to-student ratios.

Statement of the Problem

There is a disparity between the distribution (by race) of MFT students and the distribution (by race) of MFT faculty (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Disparity between the distribution (by race) of MFT students and the distribution (by race) of MFT faculty.



According to COAMFTE (2014) data from 2014 (See Table 1), based on self-reporting from 103 accredited MFT programs, 68% of the MFT students were white, while 77% of the faculty members were white; this was a ratio of 2.99 white students per white professor. For the 12% who were Black students, less than 10% of the faculty members were Black, for a ratio of 4.06 students per professor (overall, in all racial categories, the average ratio was 3.37 students per professor.)

Table 1 Aggregate Accredited Program Enrollment and Faculty Demographics

In accordance with the COAMFTE policies and procedures, COAMFTE publishes and disseminates aggregate accredited program enrollment and faculty demographics. The tables and figures below are based on self-reported data from 103 marriage and family therapy programs that submitted 2014 demographic data as part of their Annual Report or Self-Study materials. This number excludes those programs who submitted 2014 demographic data where the number of faculty and/or students broken down by gender did not equal the number of faculty and/or students broken down by ethnicity.

Table 1a: Shows the student population of accredited programs broken down by gender and ethnicity.

Gender	Doctoral (n=21)	Master's (n=72)	Post-Degree Institute (n=10)	All Degree Types (n=103)
Male	144	690	27	861
Female	510	4099	110	4719
Ethnicity	Doctoral (n=21)	Master's (n=72)	Post-Degree Institute (n=10)	All Degree Types (n=103)
Non-resident (international)	32	75	2	109
African-American/African/Black/non-Hispanic	110	877	13	1000
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	86	355	4	445
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	19	0	22
Asian or Pacific Islander	45	181	4	230
White/non-Hispanic	330	2779	97	3206
Multiethnic	17	168	11	196
Other	31	335	6	372

Table 1b: Shows the faculty population of accredited programs broken down by gender and ethnicity.

Gender	Doctoral (n=21)	Master's (n=72)	Post-Degree Institute (n=10)	All Degree Types (n=103)
Male	138	362	84	584
Female	216	604	112	932
Ethnicity	Doctoral (n=21)	Master's (n=72)	Post-Degree Institute (n=10)	All Degree Types (n=103)
Non-resident (international)	1	11	1	13
African-American/African/Black/non-Hispanic	37	78	18	133
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	22	47	8	77
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	8	2	12
Asian or Pacific Islander	36	53	2	91
White/non-Hispanic	223	709	160	1092
Multiethnic	16	31	2	49
Other	17	29	3	49

Using these figures from table 1, it can readily be seen that *any* student body has a 10% chance of having a Black professor and a 77% chance of having a white professor (and a 13% chance of having a professor of some other race).

Table 2: Race Probability of Professors

	Students	S%	Professors	T%	Student-Teacher Ratio
Black	422	12%	104	10%	4.06
White	2499	68%	836	77%	2.99
Total (includes all racial categories)	3656		1084		3.37

However, there may be some programs that may not have any Black students nor Black professors. It’s difficult to identify the demographics of each COAMFTE programs because they only publish “Aggregate Accredited program enrollment and faculty demographics” (Accreditation Manual, 2014, p. 28). Based on the above statistics, are these probabilities sufficient to properly equip the students to deal with the racial variety of their potential clientele?

With White professors making up a large percentage of total faculty, it is highly likely that a Black student will complete their entire education with mainly White professors. Based on

the high percentage of Blacks having White professors and personal experience, I became curious about other Black MFT students' experiences with their professors.

The Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) instructs accredited MFT programs to provide curriculum in the subject of diversity. Race is a topic the COAMFTE (2014) curriculum includes when exploring diversity in the following statement:

Programs must strive for diversity and inclusion. Programs strive for a diverse faculty and student body in terms of race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, disability, health status, religious and spiritual practices, nation of origin or other relevant social categories, immigration, and/or language, with a regard for the rights of religiously affiliated institutions. Not only does this prepare MFT professionals for today's diverse, ever changing, globally connected society but also it creates a stimulating, creative, and synergistic learning context. (p. 3)

It is crucial to consider race as a vital aspect of diversity. Race is defined as a group of people with similar physical appearance (Hardy, 2008). For the purposes of this study, however, race is grander than the physical attributes of a person; instead it is connected with culture which shapes attitudes, beliefs, and ideals. Hardy (2008) believes that race affects people in daily interactions. "In this regard, it is my assumption that virtually every act, deed, behavior or interaction that one engages in is shaped by the nuances of race in some way" (p. 76). Americans attitude toward race have shifted somewhat since the mid-Twentieth Century; however, based on Hardy's assertion, it seems valuable to discuss the impact of race on Black MFT students (Hardy, 2008).

In a field that is predominantly White, Black MFT students are taught primarily by White professors (COAMFTE, 2013; Todd & Holden, 2012; Miller & Stone, 2011). “To date the marriage and family therapy (MFT) profession is comprised mostly of European-American clinicians.... The underrepresentation is also apparent in the student and faculty composition in accredited MFT programs” (Wilson & Stith, 1993, p. 17). There has been little change with the statistics of Black MFT students being taught by White professors. This finding is as prevalent now as it was then. This research aims to study Marriage and Family Therapy Black MFT doctoral degree holders’ experiences with MFT professors in white universities. Because historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) do not have COAMFTE-accredited programs, they are specifically excluded from this research.

Purpose of the Study

In an effort to understand the relationship of Black MFT students and White professors in the context of marriage and family therapy programs, I seek to answer the following main research question: What were the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors?

To gain a better understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon, the main research question leads me to ask the following supplemental questions: a) How did having a White professor benefit you? b) How did having a White professor hinder you? c) What do you look for in a professor? c) How comfortable were you discussing race with your professor? d) What do White professors need to know about teaching Black students? e) What changes, if any, do White professors need to make in teaching Black students?

Qualitative Research Overview

I will utilize a qualitative phenomenological methodology for this research, in order to gain knowledge from Black MFT doctoral degree holders about their experiences with White professors in educational institutions that offer MFT programs. Using a qualitative research design allows me to go beyond the laboratory and quantitative statistics to gather about personal life experiences. Both the laboratory and quantitative statistics offer a numerical precision, but a qualitative approach depicts the complexity of personal experience (Creswell, 2007). A qualitative researcher achieves knowledge based upon what is learned in the field to ascertain how people feel, think, and act in their everyday lives.

This study can be easily understood through a specific form of qualitative research called the phenomenological research method. Phenomenological research stems from the field of philosophy. Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel are credited as the first people to use the term phenomenology (Creswell 2007; Hegel, 1979; Kant, 2009). The study will use an existential phenomenological approach. “In existential phenomenology, people and the social world are always in a dialogue with each other. People develop a sense of commonly shared reality through interaction, including face-to-face dialogue, interviews, commentaries, and the formal expression of ideas in speech, conversation and writing” (Jun, 2008). The aim of such approach is to have people describe the meanings of their experiences their world views with regards to having White professors. An existential phenomenological approach is useful in understanding the Black students’ narratives about their interactions with White professors. I will converse with, instead of interviewing, the interviewees who will be called co-researchers because of their valuable role in the research.

The phenomenology can elucidate black MFT doctoral degree holders' views of their professors. The approach will help reveal patterns that can be useful to add to the research of MFT programs to help understand the relationship between Black MFT students and White professors.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Race is a key component of understanding people. When discussing race, both the individual's viewpoint and the views of others on the subject need to be considered. "Race is not only significant in terms of how we see ourselves, but is also a powerful prism through which we are 'seen' and perceived by others. The denial or lack of awareness and sensitivity to race does not negate or diminish its pervasive significance in our lives" (Hardy, 2008, p. 77). This chapter provides an overview of the impact of White professors on Black students.

Effect of the Civil War on Education

According to Cohen (2012) more than 620,000 people died in the U. S. Civil War. Despite the catastrophic mortality rate, the civil war provided an opportunity for slaves to receive formal education, and many who were freed took advantage of that opportunity. Freed slaves saw education as empowering; it led to higher social and vocational status. Many generals advocated for slaves to seek education, including Union Generals William Tecumseh Sherman, Ulysses S. Grant, John Eaton, and Benjamin Franklin Butler.

Advocating Generals

General Sherman, who was given Grant's command when Grant became President before the War, against freeing slaves. On January 12, 1865, he met with the Secretary of War and multiple black leaders to discuss the living conditions of freed slaves (Berlin, 1982; Cohen, 2012). As a result of the meeting, Sherman provided slaves with land and animals. His advocating continued as he provided professors to instruct freed slaves towards a vocation.

General Ulysses S. Grant freed his only slave, William Jones, in 1859, during a time when slaves were still being sold. As general, Grant appointed Colonel John Eaton (who later became a general) as Superintendent of Negro Affairs for the Department of the Tennessee

(Berlin, 1982). Eaton succeeded in his role, establishing 74 schools. He provided curricula, obtained textbooks, and separated them between districts. During Grant's years as President (1869–1877), he aimed to rid the nation of slavery while protecting American citizenship for the former slaves (Berlin, 1982; Cohen, 2012).

General Benjamin Franklin Butler's policies defined slaves as contraband of war, which allowed the Union Army to provide them sanctuary on military bases rather than returning them to their former masters. Eventually, the slaves received formal education from professors hired by the American Missionary Association. Butler later co-authored the Civil Rights Act of 1875, signed by President Grant, which (at least by law) gave African American U.S. citizens the right to public accommodations, such as hotels and restaurants (Pusey, 2014; Woodson, 1919).

Freedom of slaves

In 1863, The Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln. The Proclamation was never passed by Congress. Two years later, the official abolition of slavery occurred with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (Cohen, 2012).

As slaves became free, the idea of education was enticing. They became empowered by the idea of getting an education. According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (Titcomb, 2014), more than 40 Blacks graduated from colleges and Universities located in the North in 1865. From then on, the number of Blacks enrolled in colleges and Universities increases year after year (Titcomb, 2014; Slater, 2010; U. S. Census, 2010; U.S. Department of education, 2010).

Current Black American Students in Higher Education

Enrollment in Higher Education

There are more Whites than any other race in the United States (U. S. Census, 2010); therefore, it make sense that there are more White students enrolled in colleges than any other race in the United States. Yet, there are a growing number of other races, especially students of African American descent, attending college (Slater, 2010; U. S. Census, 2010; U.S. Department of education, 2010). Blacks are the second largest minority group in United States and each year, more Blacks enroll in doctoral programs (Inman et al., 2004; Miller & Stone, 2011; Naman, 2009; U. S. Census Bureau, 2006a; U. S. Census Bureau, 2006b; Wilson & Stith, 1993).

Data from 2012 from the National Science Foundation (2014) shows approximately five percent of doctorates were earned by Black students in Unites States' universities. That same year, about 53 percent were awarded to White students. The National Science Foundation does not specify the doctoral degrees. Currently, there are no data with the number of conferred doctoral degrees by AAMFT by race in the marriage and family therapy field.

Themes of Black Doctoral Students

Length of completion for degree. Based on 2012 data (Butler, 2013 National Science Foundation, 2014), Black students take longer to complete the bachelor-to-doctorate process than other races, an average of 11.9 years. White students take an average of nine years to complete their doctorate from post-bachelors.

Dropouts. According to research, Black students are more likely to drop out of school. In 2010, eight percent of Blacks dropped out of high school, and 63 percent did not complete their undergraduate work within six years. Of those who attend doctoral programs, 50 percent never complete their doctoral degrees (Resmovits, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Although it does not specify the number of Blacks, The Chronicle of Higher Education (2004) states that minority students drop out of doctoral programs twice as often as White students (Smallwood, 2004). Livingson (2008) reports that of doctoral degrees conferred, 65.9 percent were distributed to White, as opposed to 6.6 percent to Black students. Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, and Pacific Islander earned the remaining percentages.

The reasons for dropping out of school varied. In general, the research suggested that Black students drop out due to financial problems, racial discrimination, or lack of integration in a school (Allen, 1992; Bourke, 2010; Clark, Mercer, & Ziegler-Hill, 2012; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Wilson & Stith, 1993). Despite the numerous reasons, the most common is that students drop out because there are disconnects with professors. Bouie (2011), in agreement, continues to state that another reason for dropping out of school is that many believe that professors are uncaring. Poor grades are an additional reason for leaving school prematurely. Some students blame personal issues that affect academic performance as the reason they dropped out (Bouie, 2011; Resmovits, 2013; Smallwood, 2004).

According to Naman (2009), White students are less likely to depend on professors: “White children often have greater access to the dominant culture at home and are less dependent on teachers as guides to academic success (p. 26).” Black students are not only the minority, but less likely to have the family support. They are likely to be impoverished. There are more Blacks living in single parent households than White, which makes it ideal for the Black students to give professors a major role in their lives (Allen, 1992; Naman, 2009; Zirkel, 2002). White students are less concerned about the race of their professors because White students and professors dominate most of academia.

Enrollment of Black MFT students

Statistics on Black MFT Students

The number of Black MFT students increase year after year. In October, 2013, COAMFTE compiled data from 91 schools on the number of students and professors in graduate and doctoral programs for the 2012 school year. Their report reveals that Whites and Blacks comprise the majority of MFT students. The doctoral programs consisted of 337 Whites and 91 Blacks. The masters programs had 2040 White and 313 Blacks. In reference to professors, there are 172 White professors, 38 Black professors and 40 professors of other races in doctoral programs. This reveals that African-American MFT students are more likely to have White professors than professors who are Black or of any other race. Therefore, it is important to gather Black MFT students' input on their experiences with the most common demographic of professors (COAMFTE, 2013).

The annual report from 2003 had 85 COAMFTE programs submit their demographic statistics. Seventy-seven percent of their student body consisted of European Americans, 8 percent African Americans, 4 percent Asian Americans, 6 percent Hispanic Americans, 6 percent Native Americans, and 4.4 percent other races (Inman et al., 2004). These statistics depict Blacks as the second largest ethnic group enrolled in MFT programs. This spurred questions as to whether MFT was becoming more attractive to Black students or less attractive to White students (AAMFT Magazine Sept/Oct, 2012). The survey carried out by the AAMFT concluded that if the student members are becoming more diverse, then the impact of changing demographics needs very close attention (AAMFT Magazine Sept/Oct, 2012). Because MFT membership is increasing among Blacks, the perceptions of those students are fertile ground for research.

Recruitment of Black MFT Students

Wilson and Stith in 1993 stated there is a need to recruit more Black students. Since then, there are more Black students enrolled MFT student than in the past. “Over the last 10 years, the AAMFT and accredited programs have been involved in trying to increase diversity. Michael Bowers, executive director of the AAMFT stated ‘The AAMFT has been aggressively trying to become a more diverse association’ (Todd, & Holden 2012, p. 14).

There are scholarships offered by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) to encourage minority students to attend and earn a degree in MFT. There is also a minority fellowship program which highlights students who are involved in the field and enrolled in a COAMFTE-accredited program. As mentioned before, there are no COAMFTE programs in any historically black colleges and universities, meaning minority students who wish to attend COAMFTE-accredited programs must do so at predominantly White schools, where their multicultural issues will be addressed by predominantly White professors.

Black Students and Clients

Having Black MFT professors may help students to better prepare for working with Black families. Clinical guidance from Black MFT professors will give therapists insight when working with Black families (Bean, Perry, & Bedell, 2002; Gregory & Leslie, 1996; Wilson & Stith, 1993). Black families are unlikely to seek therapy (Bean et al., 2002; Bischoff and Sprenkle, 1993; Gregory & Leslie, 1996); however, when they do attend sessions, they prefer to see a Black therapist. It is often reported that Black families will terminate prior to reaching their goals when the therapist is White (Bean et al., 2002; Bischoff & Sprenkle, 1993; Gregory & Leslie, 1996; McDowell et al., 2002). Black clients justified early termination because they did not trust, confide, or believe that the White therapist could help them (Bean et al., 2002; Bischoff

& Sprenkle, 1993; Thompson & Alexander, 2006; Wilson & Stith, 1993). Black professors will share insights with MFT students on Black families' perceptions of therapy. In addition to insights, it would be beneficial for the MFT students to gather information on how to address issues Black families may have that other cultures do not have (Bean et al., 2002; Bischoff and Sprenkle, 1993; Gregory & Leslie, 1996, Inman et al., 2004).

The Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) requires MFT programs to offer a curriculum on diversity (COAMFTE, 2008; Inman et al., 2004). Despite the efforts of the MFT programs to offer the course, there remains a gap between what the training provides and what students need. Wilson and Stith (1993) state: "Both students and program directors were concerned that students (both Black clients and European-American) were not well prepared to work with Black clients (p. 23)." More specifically, Wilson and Stith reported that 17 program directors (88 percent of directors surveyed) reported that their students were either 'extremely prepared' or 'very prepared' to work with White clients, while only five program directors (26 percent) believed that their students were similarly prepared to work with Black clients. Comparatively, program directors and students differed in how severely they evaluated the issue. For example, only one program director (5.3 percent) felt that his students were 'not prepared' to work with Black clients, yet 5 Black students (35.7 percent) felt that they were 'not prepared' to work with Black clients (Wilson & Stith, 1993).

Similarly, Awosan, Sandberg, and Hall (2011), examined 16 Black clients in MFT programs. Their findings were similar to Wilson and Stith. Forty-four percent from the 2010 research completed paperwork stating the cultural belief of the therapists was a problem for them.

In 2006, Thompson and Alexander had 44 Black clients discuss the effects of having a Black or White therapist. There was no finding of a preference for a specific race. Almeida, Hernández-Wolfe, and Tubbs (2011) explain that a therapist can never fully understand a client's culture. "We believe that not only is it fully impossible for members within particular groups to be cultural experts, but that no-one can be competent in a culture in which one has never been immersed (45)." Due to the individuality of culture, the race of the therapist does not need to be a factor when participating in therapeutic services.

Diversity Training

MFT interns who seek licensure are required to be competent in treating families from various cultural backgrounds. Additionally, COAMFTE requires MFT programs to have courses focusing on race, ethnicity, gender, age, culture, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion in order for MFT students to understand the complexity of families and their cultural backgrounds (AAMFT, 2008).

Therefore the need for cultural competence is not only from the state level but also from the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy. It is therefore integral that multicultural issues be the focus of MFT students' cultural competence (Almeida, Hernández-Wolfe & Tubbs, 2011; Schomburg & Prieto, 2011). Cultural competency within MFT is a therapists' awareness of their own culture, awareness of others' culture, and ability to engage clients effectively regardless of the clients' cultural background (Inman et al., 2004). MFT students need courses in diversity so they are ready to treat clients of all backgrounds. According to Hertlein & Lambert-Shute (2007) and Inman et al. (2004), some MFT students were unsatisfied with the amount of training they received from professors in their MFT programs.

Professors Impact on Black MFT students

More Than a Role Model

This is supported by researchers who highlighted that professors have a major impact on students' educational lives (Felder, 2010; Grier-Reed, Madyun, & Buckley, 2008; Kobrak, 1992; Love, 1993; Nettles, Thoeny, & Gossman, 1986; Noguera, 2009; Thompson, 2006; Wilson & Stith, 1993). It is likely that professors can even affect students' personal lives: "The education of any student ultimately rests and falls on the teacher-student relationship inside and sometimes outside the classroom" (Kobrak, 1992, p. 515). Therefore, professor and student interactions permeate a student's entire life.

For many Black students, professors often play major roles in their lives. Often Black students will follow the directives of professors more than any other person. They find support and encouragement from professors that enable them to attain their personal and educational goals (Allen 1992; Bouie, 2011; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Feagin, 1992; Felder, 2010; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; King, 1993; Kobrak, 1992; Love, 1993; Nettles et al., 1986; Noguera, 2009; Thompson, 2006).

According to the research (Allen 1992; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Feagin, 1992; Felder, 2010; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Love, 1993; Nettles et al., 1986; Noguera, 2009; Thompson, 2006), a student will frequently view a professor as a confidant. In addition to confiding in them, they also want to learn from them how to excel in life. There is a high correlation of people finding other people with similar backgrounds easier to approach (Kobrak, 1992; Love, 1993; Nettles et al., 1986).

Black Students with Black Professors

Since *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the debate over whether White professors can effectively educate Black students continue (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Multiple reports describe the many roles Black professors fulfill for Black students. Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) posit that Black college students believe that they can relate better with professors of the same race. “Although research suggests that relationships with faculty are especially important to the success of racial/ethnic minority students, studies indicate that Black students are often unable to form strong relationships with White faculty at PWIs [predominantly White institutions]” (p. 312). Wilson and Stith (1993) mention that Black MFT students seek out professors of a similar race. Students believe that those professors are able to provide them with wisdom, constructive criticism, and direction towards their future goals. Without their counsel, students indicated they felt lost, unmotivated, and without value (Bouie, 2011). Moreover, those who felt comfortable around faculty, identified with their race, had a sense of belonging and cohesiveness, were more likely to experience academic success (Allen, 1985, Allen, 1992).

Outside of the classroom, Black students reported they felt avoided by and uncomfortable around faculty of a different race, leading to alienation (Allen 1992; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Love, 1993). Studies posit that Black students have a greater chance of problematic relations with professors of a different race, especially with white professors (Allen, 1985; Allen, 1992; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Feagin, 1992; Love, 1993; Nettles et al., 1986). For instance, Black students conveyed that they have less contact with White professors than white students do, because faculty was “emotionally, socially, and academically unavailable to them” (Love, 1993). Consequently, they felt that faculty had difficulty relating to them because of race (Allen 1988). To bridge the gap between Black students’ relations with White professors,

McDowell and colleagues (2002) suggest, “marriage and family therapy programs also need to provide students with the experience of learning from diverse instructors, supervisors, and guest lecturers” (p. 183).

Hertlein and Lambert-Shute (2007) states that "professors" are listed as one of the six factors by prospective students when they decide on a MFT program. When looking at the professors, the personality of the professors was given greater weight than their notoriety, research interests, or clinical work. Other research outlined the traits Black students seek in professors: surrogate parent figures, disciplinarians, counselors, role models, advocates, and mentors (Dee, 2004; Inman et al., 2004; McDowell et al., 2002; Miller & Stone, 2011; Naman, 2009; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Wilson & Stith, 1993).

In contrast to the above researchers, Hendrix (2007) writes of her personal experience of Black students disrespecting her, a Black professor. She describes how some of her students felt a sense of entitlement because they were Black like her. “A special, often hidden form of incivility involves the problematic behavior of students of color toward their professors of the same race” (p.86). She explains incivility as disruptive behaviors in the form of disrespecting others, interrupting others, and questioning ideals. Based on her experience, many students have a perception that they, being Black, should have special treatment. Over the course of her experience as a professor, she has developed five "duties" to be an effective professor to her entire classroom: (1) cultivating a safe place for discussion and learning, (2) providing an intellectually challenging course, (3) exhibiting interest and fairness, (4) teaching the curriculum (while slipping in racial tolerance), and (5) modeling inclusive, interpersonal instruction that entails teaching to a person, not just a “student.”

Black Students with White Professors

There are those who argue that Black students do not need Black professors. Although there is prevalent literature on the importance of Blacks students needing Blacks professors, there is some literature opposing that belief. Arguments exist that if Professors, regardless of race, are culturally and racially sensitive, a positive mentorship can occur that would help in school (Felder, 2010; Inman et al., 2004; Miller & Stone, 2011; Wilson & Stith, 1993). One of the participants from a study Miller and Stone (2011) completed stated: “My mentor was very helpful. . . . She was not Black, yet she was a great mentor. A lot of people ask if a mentor should be someone of the same race. The main thing was that she was concerned about me . . . she would always make sure that she would put me in touch with different people at conferences and helped me consider who could be on my committee” (p.106). The synchronization of Black MFT students and professors is not always necessary for academic success (Inman et al., 2004; Miller & Stone, 2011; Wilson & Stith, 1993). However, most of the literature on White professors teaching Black students is relevant to elementary, middle, and high school.

Allen (1992) studied Black college students' experience in a predominantly White college compared with historically Black colleges. He found that Blacks excel most when they have positive relationships with faculty. Blacks who attend predominantly White academic systems tend to achieve less, academically. Additionally, Black students are less socially involved at predominantly White colleges. Findings from Allen’s research are useful in understanding the impact of social involvement, career choices, and academic achievement on Black MFT students who have White professors.

Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) concurred with Allen. “Research indicates that strong relationships with faculty are crucial to student success at college. Faculty-student relationships

are strongly positively correlated with student satisfaction with college, academic achievement, and retention” (p. 312). Their article is a compilation of Black high school and college students' experience in a primarily White institution. They added that Black students will reach out to their friends and family members from home for support and academic encouragement.

Another factor which influences Black college students' success is involvement with Black organizations. Their involvement with organizations provides the opportunity to interact with Black professionals who can become mentors and supporters. Also, being involved with the Black organizations affords them the opportunity to work with other Blacks in community service projects. Lastly, such involvement provides a distraction from perceived minority status amongst a predominantly White student body.

Students and Existentialism

At the doctoral level, students are learning their preferred subject of choice. As they go through the program, they learn that there is little they can control. However, they continue to see their existence is based on the meanings they give to their experiences based on their perceptions of the world, others, and self. I believe that individuals are part of a whole system in the world. Black MFT doctoral degree holders' existences include their interactions with the world as well as their interactions with White professors

Summary

As it stands, Black MFT students are more likely to have White professors. Presently there is a gap in the research discussing Black MFT students' experience with White professors. In response to the paucity of research, this study will use existential -phenomenological qualitative research. Existential phenomenology is used to mean “based on lived experience.” This research will interview Black MFT students' to gather information on their lived experience with having

White professors in their MFT programs. In the next chapter I will outline the qualitative phenomenology that I will apply to the research question: “What are the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders with their White Professors?”

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology of existential phenomenology that was used for the study. It also explains the procedure for me as the researcher, recruiting participants, research design, and data analysis of this research while exploring Black MFT doctoral degree holders experience with White professors.

Purpose of the Study

The primary focus of this research was to examine the experience of Black Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) doctoral degree holders with White professors. This exploration consisted of obtaining the students' perspective of their experiences and the impact such experiences made on their lives. Although there is a body of research on Black students being taught by White professors, the research is neither on doctoral degree holders nor on the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. A description of these experiences provided insight regarding the benefits and drawbacks of having White professors. This information was beneficial in understanding the impact of White professors on Black MFT students.

Lyons et al., (2011) encourage more qualitative research related to Blacks. In addition to having more qualitative research, they discuss the need for the research to be useful for that population. The goal of this research was to understand the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors.

Qualitative Research

I sought to explore the life experiences of Black Marriage and Family Therapy doctoral degree holders, so a qualitative approach seems best. This approach permitted me to obtain subjective opinions (Kostere & Percy, 2006; Lyons, 2011). A qualitative approach allowed me to obtain information from a group of individuals with personal life experiences without

quantitative statistics (Golafshani, 2003). Both the laboratory and quantitative statistics offer numerical precision, but a qualitative approach depicts the complexity of personal experience (Creswell, 2007; Golafshani, 2003).

Qualitative research is useful in understanding participants' way of life. From understanding their lifestyles, I can infer facts about the world around them. Creswell (2007), quoting Denzin and Lincoln states:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 36)

A qualitative approach is a common method in which people describe their views of themselves and the world around them. Research using a qualitative approach is concerned with the meaning research participants assign to their experiences as they attempt to decipher the meanings behind their actions. Creswell (2007) explains that a qualitative approach is an attempt to explore the meaning of individuals' and groups' perceptions to problems and solutions in their lives. I sat aside my own viewpoints, as much as possible. I obtained insight from patterns in the data rather than hypothesizing over collected data. A qualitative researcher achieves knowledge based upon what is learned in the field to ascertain how people feel, think, and act in their everyday lives.

The qualitative approach was selected for this research because the information could not be obtained in a laboratory, nor is it numerical in nature. The design of a qualitative research project focuses on the meaning of narratives. Quantitative research detaches the emotions from the participants' experiences, but provides cohesion of traits, worldviews, and context emerges as people tell their stories to others (Creswell, 2007; Golafshani, 2003; Lyons et al., 2011; Osborne, 1990).

The interest was not just to have Black MFT doctoral degree holders share their experience as students; rather it was dissecting specific impacts of their relationships with White professors. For the participants, Black MFT doctoral degree holders, described the impact of having White professors, I sought to understand the meaning of the participants' experience. As a result, using an existential phenomenological approach was best (Giorgi, 1997).

Existential Phenomenology

There is controversy about who coined "phenomenology." Many people credit the philosophers Emmanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger (Giorgi, 1997; Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994). Phenomenology is the study of "phenomena" or the study of how we experience things (Osborne, 1990). Creswell (2007) explains: "A phenomenology provides a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals" (p. 62). There are several types of phenomenological methods. For this research, existential phenomenological was best suited for the research design. This method provides researchers the opportunity to discover the human experience from the first-person viewpoints of the research participants or co-researchers (Osborne, 1990, Owen, 1994). Although there is not one type of phenomenological perspective, an existential phenomenology was best in order to gain insights into the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors.

History of Existential Phenomenology

Existential phenomenology is grounded in the ideas of Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Soren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche (Jun, 2008; Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994). Maurice Merleau-Ponty, at a later time, borrowed some of their ideas as he developed his own. (Giorgi, 1997; Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994).

Heidegger is known for the term *Dasein* (Jun, 2008; Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994) which is the entity of existing or being. He discussed his views in his book, *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927). *Dasein* is the consciousness of knowing one's own existence or "being-in-a-world." There are many words Heidegger uses to describe his idea that there is an interchangeable relationship between activity and the world. In other words, *Dasein* is related to other *Daseins*. "Dasein is not an isolated, immaterial being (a Cartesian mind) but one related to other *Daseins* as well as to the things in its world through action. There is something special about these relationships connecting the being of *Dasein* to the activity of interpretation—specifically the interpretation of being" (Tietz, 2001, p. 17). Interpretation between the world and being is assessed along with the assessment of the individual being.

Merleau-Ponty adopted some of Heidegger's ideas in his view of how individuals become beings. Beings exist either authentically or inauthentically. To be authentic is becoming true to himself or herself and being free from societal pressure. Authenticity is enhanced when a person aids another to become transparent to himself or herself. Inauthentic is opposite of authenticity. Freedom is part of achieving self-awareness. For freedom to be part of the authentic being, it needs to be in the absent of guilt. Freedom transpires when there is self-awareness in following the conscious' directions.

Facticity is a characterization of being stemming from the past encounters. Facticity is a historical situation that influenced the being. Situations that occurred in the past becomes a fact. In other words, our past interactions with the world affect our current and future beings. The being does not precede existence, but the past remains in a memory bank that may project into future existence.

The being is impacted by not only interactions with the world, but it also includes interactions with others. There is a social responsibility to others in society. It is not society that impacts us; rather it is the choices beings make. All individuals making choices suggest that individuals have freedom. However, there are consequences to the choices individuals make. It is the individual who has to deal with the consequence of one's choices, and this becomes self-responsibility.

Merleau-Ponty construes existential phenomenology as a movement in which beings come to understand truth based on their interactions with the world. He states: "The phenomenological world is not the bringing to explicit expression of a pre-existing being, but the laying down of being. Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 16). He posits that meaning occurs out of interacting with the world. Every interaction Black doctoral MFT graduates encounters has shaped them. This research reported what Black MFT doctoral graduates descriptions are and the meanings they provide as a result of having had White professors.

Merleau-Ponty's book, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), mentions his views on perception and consciousness. He believes that perception occurs systemically. A person is being perceived by others as he or she perceives others (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Merleau-Ponty calls it "primacy of perception." He states: "The world is not what I think, but what I live through" (p.

24). He suggested that we are in a relationship with our bodies, with the world, and with others. It is through these relationships that we came to understand our beings. As a result of our relationships, we should remain inquisitive as to how it functions. Human experience is based on the meaning that it is given. Humans are studied by their interactions with the world. This research seeks to understand how the perceptions of Black MFT doctoral degree holders give meaning to their relationships with White professors. It will explore the meanings they give to their experiences.

Therefore Merleau-Ponty's views on consciousness are shaped by the way the world works. He believes consciousness is intertwined with the world around him. Reality exists because the world exists. He is aware of its existence because of his interactions and involvement with the world. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) states: "We choose our world and the world chooses us" (p.26). A person is inseparable from the world. Based on Merleau-Ponty's teachings, I was eager to listen to research participants' describe their experiences with their professors has impacted their lives.

Existential Phenomenology Integration with Therapy

As philosophers explore the possible ways the world works, marriage and family therapists, similarly, examine clients' experiences during sessions. Phenomenological implications are important in counseling and marriage and family therapy (Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994; Sprenkle & Moon, 1996). Marriage and Family Therapists can benefit from using an existential phenomenological approach for several reasons.

First of all, phenomenological research allows MFT researchers to not feel constrained by statistics found in quantitative methods. Instead, it permits the MFT researchers to study the experiences of participants, similar to what therapists do with clients in therapeutic sessions.

Existential phenomenological researchers also investigate the transmitted information that is given to them (Owen, 1994). I collected and interpreted data much as therapists do with clients.

Another motive for MFT researchers to use an existential phenomenological approach is that I needed to use similar skills to establish and maintain rapport with participants as they do with their clients (Osborne, 1990, Owen, 1994). I employed active listening skills, demonstrated empathy, and remained nonjudgmental. Other skills needed by both researchers and therapists are openness, positive regard for others, and caring.

Similar to therapists, existential phenomenological researchers must have self-awareness. They need to seek to be unbiased throughout the research process. Although I am the same race as my participants, I did not assume that all Black MFT doctoral degree holders had the same experiences as me. Instead, I was open to hearing how their experiences may or not be different than mine. Most of my life, I thought I did not fit under a particular race. Numerous people have said, "You're not Black" or "You're not Black enough." Even my own brother, who is White, would jokingly say, "I'm more Black than you!" I never learned what needed to change in order to be so called "Black." Never knowing where I fit in made it easy as I listened without biases to others discuss how they construct their experiences. I knew my story is very different from many individuals, which made it possible to apply a not-knowing stance with the participants who are co-researchers. Calling the participants co-researchers was a reminder that they are the experts in their lives. With that understanding, I employed active listening skills as the co-researchers speak about their experiences. Being open to the research process allowed me to listen to both positive and negative experiences the participants express. By doing so, I upheld ethical integrity, which is essential.

The safety of co-researchers was of utmost concern to researchers as they seek to understand the lived experiences from the participants' narratives (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994; Taylor & Bogden, 1998). This sense of safety applied to both a client's emotional and psychological states. Prior to beginning the study, it was reviewed then approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) after assessing for potential risks and benefits of the study. Client's safety was assured in multiple ways. First, I provided verbal and oral explanation of the study prior to the co-researchers signing the consent forms. Details of potential risks, which included emotional distress, flashbacks, and intrusive thoughts, was disclosed to co-researchers. Moreover, I explained ways that co-researchers' identifying information will remain private. Lastly, co-researchers were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time during the research process. I responded to additional questions or comments the co-researchers had to eliminate all potential harm.

Moreover, the existential phenomenological methodology permitted me to focus on the participants' discourse. "Some research studies simply seek to explore the perspectives of those involved in a particular process" (Cooper & Endacott, 2007, p. 817). Similar to watching a plot unfold in a movie, I sought to comprehend the frame of reality the participants had as they shared their stories. Hence, an existential phenomenological approach was used to collect the data of beliefs, feelings, opinions, and/or experiences that cannot be measured statistically, yet offered value in identification, knowledge, and understanding (Osborne, 1990; Owen 1994). Jun (2008) says it best, "Existential phenomenology seeks to understand the everyday world of the individual. Thus the vital role of phenomenology in particular was to describe meanings of social actions (or organizational actions) and the experiences of everyday life from the individual's point of view" (p. 94). Therefore, this research centered on understanding the experiences of

Black MFT doctoral degree holders experience with White professors (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003; Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994).

Additionally, the existential phenomenological methodology was fitting because it provides a common framework for the experiences of the Black MFT. “It is important to consider the selection of a method that holistically communicates the participants’ ‘voice,’ which in turn is most likely to reflect the cultural worldview of communities of African descent” (Lyons et al., 2011, p. 165). The experiences of the co-researchers were both internal and external. As Black MFT doctoral degree holders tell their stories, I was able to access the meanings found within the experiences, then analyzed the meanings with the data reported. Such a qualitative approach offered a clearer picture of the complexities of the Black MFT students’ experiences. Existential phenomenology is about the description of the process. It focuses on the world which Husserl calls pure consciousness. Husserl’s ideas aim to illuminate the emotional and imaginative process (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994).

Prior to conducting the research, existential phenomenological researchers go through a self-reflective process, called bracketing, to eradicate biases and potential influence on the research (Osborne, 1990). In this phase, researchers describe their presupposed notions about the phenomenon they are getting ready to study. I identified my own biased opinions about the research. “I see researchers who embrace this idea when they begin a project by describing their own experiences and bracketing out their views before proceeding with the experience of others” (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). In line with Creswell’s observation, I incorporated my views about the research in this chapter. This bracketing process was essential to analysis and reflects only the participants’ perspectives (Owen, 1994).

Self of the Researcher

I am a Black who in twenty years of schooling had only two Black professors and both of them in my doctoral program. Through this research, the role of one of those two has shifted from professor to mentor. Of all my professors, two stand out as having the most impact on my life: One is a White professor from high school; the other is a Black professor from the doctoral program who is now viewed as an extended family member. My experiences inspired me to be curious about the impact of professors with other students.

My experience as a Black individual who in twenty years of schooling had only two Black teachers or professors, and both of them in my doctoral programs, made me realize that the race of my professors did not "stand-out" in my experience. I noticed the race of my professors near the end of my doctoral degree after selecting this dissertation topic. Looking back, the race of my professors was never considered. Such was the norm that I never once stopped to realize the impact it may or may not have had in my life. I noticed that younger students, 30 and younger, connected at first with the Black professors. The older African American students connected with the professors with whom they shared interests. Although, I sought educational and personal relationships with professors who shared my interests, I wondered if there were differences in the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders based on age of the co-participants.

Role of the Researcher

As part of the informed consent, I informed the co-researcher (participants) about the purpose of the research, advised them of confidentiality requirements, and addressed issues raised by the participants. The interviews allowed participants to describe their experiences and events about having a White professor.

During the interview, I utilized active listening skills and remained unbiased to prevent personal opinions to surface which may have skewed the collected data (Lyons et al., 2011). Realistically, it was unfeasible for a researcher to escape assumptions about the world and to completely exclude my involvement during the interview process, from an existentialist framework. I exhibited neutrality by being vigilant with my nonverbal communication, such as rising of the brow, gasping while participants are talking, and modifying pitch of voice. (Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994; Taylor & Bogden, 1998). After transcription, I identified and categorized the transcripts into themes.

Data Procedures

A sample size ranging from six to fourteen is typical for most qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Leedy & Ormond, 2005). “Five to eight participants are usually sufficient for a homogenous sample” (Cooper & Endacott, 2007, p. 818). When doing qualitative methodology, the size is not as important as the quality of the research. (Leedy & Ormond, 2005; Lyons et al., 2011). Purposeful sampling was used to recruit six Black MFT doctoral degree holders, recruited by advertisements in social media, on bulletin boards, and by word of mouth. The selection criteria included race of participants, degree type, and graduation year.

Target Population and Participant Selection

After approval by the Internal Review Board (IRB), I began marketing to recruit qualified participants. I informed colleagues, co-workers, family, and friends of the required qualifications for participants. I also asked the appropriate administrator at my current university to email invitation letters (see Appendix B) on my behalf to all COAMFT accredited doctoral programs. Furthermore, I emailed an AAMFT contact person and ask them to forward the invitation letter to the members of the AAMFT association. I, additionally, shared the information on a tear-off

advertising page (See Appendix C) for posting at a local university. There were also postings about the research on Social media such as email, Instagram and Facebook. As qualified participants signed up, the interviews were scheduled.

I wanted co-researchers to consist of adult male and female individuals who identify themselves as Black or African American. However, According to the AAMFT, most MFT students are women. COAMFTE (2013) declared 78% were females and 22% were males. Therefore, since there are three times more women than men by, it was unlikely there would be more males participating in the research.

In the advertising flyer (see Appendix C), I marketed for Black or African American participants or co-researchers were self-proclaimed MFT doctoral degree holders who graduated from a COAMFTE-accredited program with a degree confirmation date ranging from 2009 to 2014. The 5-year range was chosen for a couple reasons. One was to prevent potential stress on students who were currently enrolled in the MFT program. Another reason was to increase possible self-awareness among the participants who will be reflecting on their experiences. No effort was made to control the age or current professional status.

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (2001) requires researchers to protect participants' identity and to follow ethical codes. Participants' personal information was de-identified by replacing it with a letter and a two-digit number. By de-identifying participants' information, their confidentiality was upheld. Tremendous effort was made to build and maintain trust so participants were comfortable with expressing themselves. Co-researchers had the right to refuse further participation in the research at any point of the research. If participants declined to move forward, efforts to safeguard their information continued nonetheless.

Research Design

Demographic Information

Various instruments were used in the research. Basic demographics sheet (refer to Appendix E) was distributed to participants prior to initiating the interview; it was used to collect educational background, graduation year, school or university, and number of Black and non-Black professors during their doctoral school years. Once the forms were filled out, co-researchers submitted them to me. The demographics forms were used to ensure prospective participants are eligible to participate in the research. Regardless of eligibility of participants, an assigned number replaced the co-researchers' names in order to protect their identity. This information was recorded in a Microsoft Excel document for easy reference and comparisons. Following submission of demographics and signing of consent forms for participating in the research (see Appendix D), co-researchers participated in face-to-face interview. The interview was scheduled at a location mutually agreed upon by co-researchers and researcher. The location was at places where confidentiality can be maintained.

Recordings

A digital voice recorder was used during the interview. After the interview recordings were maintained on two separate digital storage devices. They are kept in my locked file cabinet.

Field Notes

Field notes assisted with reflexivity and aid qualitative researchers in their efforts toward reliability and validity (Creswell, 2007). Field notes are descriptive writing by me documenting the observations made as participants communicate their stories. They were taken during the interview process and recorded nonverbal communications such as body movements, facial expressions, eye contact, emotions (or lack thereof) displayed, and any other physical

movements. Tone of voice and uttered sounds were also noted. These notes were carefully documented and examined as they are associated with the question being asked and answered to decipher the parallel between the verbal and nonverbal communication. Field notes provided the opportunity for me researcher to record any incongruities in participants' responses. These notes are usually made as journal entries.

The Interview

The interview was the essential and primary form of data collection. Following the example of existential phenomenological study, the interviewer used open-ended semi-structured questions (Jun, 2008; Owen, 1994). I had guided questions for the semi-structure interview (see Appendix A) surrounding the research question, but some questions were prompted by answers provided by the participants. The questions and statements for the participants focused on their experiences with White professors. The questions helped maintained a free flowing conversation to promote the participants to communicate about past events surrounding their experiences as students at doctoral COAMFTE MFT programs.

The questions were developed as a type of behavioral interviewing. Behavioral interviewing was used because it encompasses telling a story within an answer to interview questions. "...We attempt to understand what is unobservable about people in organizations: that is, their thoughts, their emotions, their values, their consciousness, their sense of freedom, their existence in a dehumanizing environment, and the meaning of their actions that reflect their private world of experience" (Jun, 2008, pg. 93-94). Allowing participants to elaborate on their story was essential. Their storytelling responses added depth and richness to analyzing the data.

Data Analysis

All data collected remained in my possession. The data was stored in a locked cabinet at my home office. I transcribed the interviews and checked for accuracy, which were saved in a Word document. All information recorded on an electronic device were accessed by passwords.

Copies of their transcripts were emailed to interviewees in an encrypted Word document within two weeks from the face-to-face interview date. The participants were given an opportunity to clarify or provide any information they forgot during the initial interview. If there were modifications in the form of adding, subtracting, or correcting any initial statements made during the interview, this was attended to by me as requested by the co-researchers.

Participants' information was de-identified to maintain confidentiality. The data was encoded in order to organize it into categories. The coding category was determined once all data was collected and reviewed using Kostere and Percy (p. 81, 2006) outlined procedures for analyzing data as mentioned below:

1. Read and review data.
2. Review the highlighted data for confirmation of its relations to the research question.
3. Code the data.
4. Cluster data that are related, initiating pattern identification.
5. Perform steps 1-4 for all participants' data, then compare and contrast them to each other.
6. Identify patterns in data to turn into themes.
7. Arrange themes with justifiable data.
8. Write detailed analysis of theme and data.

9. Input quotes from data to support themes.
10. Synthesize patterns to the least common denominator.

In the existential phenomenological method, continuous reflection of co-researchers lived experiences developed into patterns. The existential method uses pre-determined themes or categories after searching the data. From the data, it was clear that themes and categories did not exist in isolation; instead, they overlapped and interacted with one another. I was persistent in dissecting the collected data to specify categories and sub-categories to fully comprehend the phenomenon in my analysis. “Analysis of data uses concepts from the theoretical framework and generally results in identification of recurring patterns, categories, or factors that cut through the data and help to further delineate the theoretical frame” (Caelli et al., 2003, p. 6). While analyzing the data, themes surfaced. Then, I clearly identified the coding themes by providing examples, explanations, and quotes from the data. By doing so, I showed achievement of the analysis.

Reliability and Validity

Even with the most accurate record, Gergen (1985) reminds researchers that interpretation is rhetoric and open to scrutiny by other researchers and the reader. To achieve reliability and validity, I repeatedly considered how my viewpoint may influence the research. Additionally, I provided the participants with the transcript from the individual interviews in order to verify and corroborate accuracy of the transcriptions (Creswell, 2007; Golafshani, 2003; Osborne, 1990).

Golafshani (2003) wrote an entire article discussing various viewpoints of reliability in qualitative research, but he reached no definitive conclusion. Reliability is important, he wrote, but needs to focus more on measuring the “credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency

or dependability, and applicability or transferability” (p. 601) of the research. Golafshani referenced numerous individuals who oppose the concept of reliability in qualitative research because the research should be based on the quality of the study. If the research helps others understand a phenomenon, it is reliable. Another viewpoint is that reliability occurs after the determination that the research is valid. The best way to create reliability was for me to reference my interpretations with support from the data (Golafshani, 2003). It was necessary to provide “significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participant experiences the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). The reader would be the judge of the credibility of the research.

Bracketing. Validity in qualitative research can be achieved if used to improve rigor. Bracketing was ridding myself of potential biases throughout the course of the research (Creswell, 2007; Osborne, 1990). The more I was self-aware, the less likely there was to be presuppositions that would make for inaccurate data from the participant's perspective; and the result is a greater understanding of the phenomena. Bracketing started at the beginning of the research—in the development of the research question(s)—and continued until the finalization of the research. It was important for me to maintain a "not-knowing" stance and remain curious as the participants respond to the open-ended questions.

Summary

A phenomenological research method allowed participants to explain the meaning of their lives. Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenological thinking further encouraged participants to discuss their perceptions on the phenomenon of being a Black MFT doctoral degree holders in COAFMTE programs taught primarily by White professors. The participants' perceptions provided insights on their interactions within the world of COAMFTE doctoral

programs, and themselves. For these reasons, an existential phenomenological methodology was best suited for this research.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of this study illuminate the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors. This existential phenomenological research permitted an in-depth look at the perceptions of these participants, or co-researchers. The phenomenologically oriented interviews allowed all participants to reflect on their experiences and explore personal meanings related to their past experiences as doctoral Black MFT students (Allen, 1992). The data from these interviews provided rich, layered descriptions of their experiences. The data analysis was based on a model suggested by Kostere and Percy (2006), as explained in the methodology section in the previous chapter.

Based on the principles of existentialism, all beings experience the world, then provide meaning to those experiences based on their perceptions. The themes that emerged from this study came from reading, and re-reading the participant's interviews through this very lens. Sub-themes were determined if at least three co-researchers made similar statements. Sub-themes were grouped into primary themes. Primary themes focused on the co-researcher's experience with the world, others, and themselves. I had to organize the themes multiple times to be congruent with the methodological approach. Questions and co-researchers' answers were compared to each theme and sub-theme as confirmation of each theme reaching its lowest denomination. As the themes are described, the co-participants' statements were evaluated to determine a comparison to the themes. The chapter will conclude with a cross-case analysis, supplementing the reader with a deeper understanding of the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of Black MFT degree holders' experiences with White professors.

Brief Demographic Information of the co-researchers

The original intent was to have six co-researchers participate in this study although in qualitative research, four to six participants add depth to any study (Creswell, 2007). Consequently, only five Black MFT doctoral degree holders were eligible due to the study's stringent qualifications. While there were multiple advertisements and marketing attempts sent, the challenge deemed great to find qualified Black doctoral students who graduated within the conferred date of 2009–2014 time frame to participate with little response back. It was decided to include a respondent who graduated in 2007 due to her enthusiasm for participating in the research. Her responses parallel many of the other co-researchers adding to the congruence of the research. All the co-researchers were Black females between the ages of 30 and 50. Their degrees were obtained between 2007 and 2014. Two participants did not report their ethnicity as one reported, “other;” and the other identified herself as African-Caribbean. Yet, another one indicated she had Latin background, and another co-researcher checked she was “2 or more ethnicities,” but did not specify. All the participants were employed as marriage and family therapists, but some had other titles, which included “family consultant” or “consultant psychotherapist”. Two co-researchers also mentioned they were employed as professors while another disclosed her professorial status during the interview. Detailed description of the co-researchers is withheld to enhance confidentiality for the co-researchers. The demographic characteristics of the co-researchers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>Grad year</i>	<i>#of blk prof</i>	<i>#of wht prof</i>	<i>#of other race prof</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
<i>J11</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>Unreported</i>	<i>PhD</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>Family therapist</i>
<i>J12</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>PhD</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Consultant psychotherapist</i>
<i>J13</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>African-Caribbean</i>	<i>PhD</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Family consultant</i>
<i>J14</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>Unreported</i>	<i>PhD</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>Therapist/professor</i>
<i>J15</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>Hispanic/Latin</i>	<i>PhD</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>7+</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Therapist</i>
<i>J16</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>2 or more</i>	<i>PhD</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Therapist/professor</i>

Each co-researcher who agreed to participate in the study was interviewed at a location convenient for her. These locations were chosen to ensure privacy and safety so that each co-researcher could openly share her experiences. In order to ensure the criteria for the co-researchers were met, detailed screening was administered via email and/or phone call. All the scheduled interviews were confirmed by telephone and email. In turn and without prejudice, I carefully explained that the participants had the freedom to withdraw from participating in the research at any time without prejudice. The co-researchers selected their own interview times. Prior to the interview, each co-researcher acknowledged an informed consent (see Appendix B). The informed consent contained: the rights of the participant, confidentiality, coding, purpose of the study, and the transcription/analysis of the study were thoroughly explained. Following the signing of the consent forms, the co-researchers completed a demographic form (see Appendix C) answering questions on age, gender, race, ethnicity, doctoral school institution's name, confirmed date of graduation, credentials, number of White professors, number of Black professors, and number of professors of other races. Following the signing of the forms, the recording equipment was switched on to capture the rest of the interactions. The remaining questions in the interview schedule focused upon the experience of the individual with White professors (see Appendix D). As a final point, each interview ended with the question, "Is there a question I didn't ask you that you wished I had asked?" This final question allowed for an opportunity to extract the co-researchers' last thoughts and provided a sense of closure to the interviews.

Analysis of the interviews

The following is an analysis of each interview, along with a description that provides context. To achieve the highest level of privacy in the study, the pseudonyms presented in this

document will have one letter and two numbers (See Table 3). Likewise, any identifying information that may appear in the transcriptions, such as names, institutions, place of employment, or country of origin or other descriptors were changed or deleted.

The aggregate summaries are from the use of digital recordings and transcriptions, from six interviews lasting between 30 to 90 minutes. Meanings surfaced from repeatedly dissecting the transcripts (Giorgi, 1985) from each interview. Then, I was able to identify themes and sub-themes as I used highlighters to color code statements from co-researchers based on the Kostere and Percy's (2006) qualitative thematic analysis. An existential framework was helpful in identifying and organizing themes which addresses the original research questions posed in this study: What were the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors? Saturation was reached in the sixth and final interview. This chapter will provide a contextual understanding of the experience of the Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors and it will act as the basis for the culmination of the work in Chapter 5. The analytical categories are as follows:

1. Perception of world: The program
 - A. Freedom
 - B. Responsibility
 - C. Facticity
2. Perception of Others: White professor
 - A. Isolation
 - B. Connectedness
3. Perception of self: Participants
 - A. Authenticity

1. Educational
 2. Professional
 3. Personal
- B. Angst
- C. Autonomy
4. Advice for Black students
 - A. Prejudice
 - B. Ownership
 5. Advice for White professors
 - A. Attributes
 - B. Intentionality
 - C. Recognition
 - D. Introspection

Figure 2: *Themes and Categories*

Research Findings

All of the co-researchers were open and cooperative in their discussions with their experiences with interacting with White professors during their enrollment as students in the COAFMTE doctoral programs. Some of the co-researchers expressed a desire to participate so they could share their experience to enhance marriage and family therapy programs in the future. Others thought the opportunity would help bridge the interactions between Black students and White professors (McDowell, Fang, Brownlee, Young, and Khanna, 2002). Regardless, of their reasons for participating in the research, the co-researchers expressed both positive and negative experiences in their interactions with White professors as they provide the answer to the research question “What were the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors?”

The interview protocol included a semi-structured question as point of reference to guide the interviews (Jun 2008). At times, additional questions surfaced depending on the co-researchers' responses. After the interview, it was apparent that the co-researchers' narratives appeared nicely interwoven, and five themes emerged (see Table 4). The themes were (1) Perceptions of the world: the program, (2) Perception of others: the White professors, (3) Perception of self: the participants, (4) Advice for Black students, and (5) Advice for White professors. The themes and sub-themes surfaced describing the co-researchers' experiences with White professors. The individual themes will be discussed along with applicable sub-themes. Quotes from transcribed interviews are provided to accurately compliment the themes and sub-themes.

Theme 1: Perceptions of the world: The Program. Co-researcher expressed their recollections of participating in the field of marriage and family therapy accredited through

AAMFT. Based on the information they shared, 3 sub-themes surfaced. The sub-themes explained the co-researchers perceptions of the COAMFTE programs based on programs' (1) freedom, (2) responsibility, and (3) facticity.

Freedom. According to participants, they freely decided to attend a COAMFTE doctoral program with disregarding the race of professors as a concern because it is an unconscious factor. From an existential framework, there is the idea that individuals have the freedom to create themselves and understand the effects of their choices. The choices one makes form our freedom constructs and reconstructs the meanings we give to our experiences. Five of the six co-researchers spoke about their decision to attend the MFT doctoral programs. J12 described that coming from the social work background to attend doctoral program in MFT, the race of the professors was not a consideration: "...Partly based on the fact that the field of family therapy was new to me so it was a great learning experience. So that was a great experience so just learning something new because my background is social work...There was one Black professor at my masters in health science and one Black professor in my masters in social work and so coming here having one Black professor just made me think, 'okay in most programs there's just one professor.'"

J13 also followed expressing that the races of the professors were not a factor when choosing to attend the program. She said, "So I didn't give it thought as to whether or not I was going to have Black, White even though I know the US is predominantly White so I would have more White professors so my mind set was more what the program has to offer than who the professors are... it was what I could obtain from the program, not so much the person. So I was investing myself in the program into doing what I needed to do; what would give me results to and not so much looking as to the response from a professor.

J14 concurred with the previous two co-researchers: “I don’t know if I was looking so much about the professor as I went into the program. I was focused more on what the program would offer.” Still another co-researcher (J15) explained that touring the campus was the way her freedom to attend the marriage and family therapy was decided. “My most positive experience was actually going and touring the campus and deciding to come. It was the idea that, 'we welcome anyone.' So just come in and be part of the process. I think I like that. The idea of everybody welcoming you and being respected of who you are...at least at first, that's how it felt. I think that encouraged me to go.” J16 explained that she was well aware that the PhD program had few Black professors, but that didn’t keep her from pursuing the degree. “I was prepared because of other previous experiences I’ve had with different schoolings. I was prepared to know this was going to be something if I want it I'm going to fight for it because when it comes to PhDs, there's only 1% of us and with Black ones, there's like point something of that within the one percent.”

Responsibility. Responsibility is an essential part of existentialism. With the choices that made, individuals need to take responsibility for what happens to them. However, it is through responsibility, change takes place (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Existentialists are often talking about personal responsibility. In spite of this, many of the co-researchers perceived that responsibility was based on the standards of program. In fact, many voiced their views of the programs which affected Black students experience with White professors. For example, J11 explained that she was dubious that she would excel to become a faculty member at the university where she was attending due to her race: “But out of the five Black students PhD levels who did graduate from [institution’s name], one was able to get a practicum...And there’s quite a number who are Black who graduated and not one of them except this recent one who is

doing one practicum only because it was like nobody else wanted to do a Saturday afternoon kind of schedule.” J12 continued to say, “Still underrepresented but represented and I think it’s important when you have programs that appeal to Black students that the staff team ought to be representative of the people that you’re trying to attract to your program by i.e. the students...And I say that because I don’t think that issues of race and diversity were automatically bought into a lot of the teaching.” Some co-researchers expressed that a shift in the COAMFTE programs need to occur. J12 recommended that a shift in the program policy and procedures need to occur for improvement with diversity. “Some of the changes that could be made need to be made more in a programmatic level rather than an individual professor level. I think if it’s made at that level and implemented as a policy, ‘this is how this is done’ then if people don’t do it, then they’re in breach of their contract. So you know some of the changes I think these to be made at program level and I think...”

As far as J14, she believed that the program’s responsibility to go beyond the traditional mental health component was essential in her benefiting from the program. Prior to enrolling in the program, she received counsel on being able to apply MFT teachings to the corporate world. In her words, J14 said, “And you know before I entered the program I actually looked at organizational psychology. I don’t remember why, but I looked at it. I remember reaching out to a professor from the master’s program and I said, ‘I think I may want to do this,’ and I remember her saying, it was a white professor, ‘well, you can do that through family therapy as well.’ So, I guess that did influence me to stick with family therapy because I already had my Masters in family therapy and then I was like, ‘I know I want to get a doctorate but do I want to get a doctorate kind of on the psychological end of it?’” J15 discussed that adding a mentoring part of the program would make it greater. “And I think when you investing in people who are from

different cultures, I think there has to be some kind of mentoring when it comes to writing and feedback. I think when you come into this program, there needs to be some conversation about how this journey is about being an individual; how this relationship is about us getting to know each other, but know it is more about getting to know yourselves.”

Facticity. Many of the co-researchers communicated factual statements related to the culture of the Marriage and Family doctoral programs as it relates to Black doctoral students suggesting they were aware of facticity. Most of the co-researchers statements acknowledged that most of their professors were White. They also disclosed having one or two non-White professors during the duration of being enrolled in doctoral program. J15 was the only participant who proclaimed, “I’ve never experience what’s it’s like to have a Black professor.” J11 said, “It was just all that I had. It was just that’s all they had. I didn’t see it as I’m going to [university’s name] and they only had White professors so I’m going to learn more and do better.”

J13 explained about the statistics on Black MFT students being exposed to non-White professors. She said, “I think looking at percentage....I am aware that the marriage therapy field is more than 90% White...It’s 90% [White professors] then about 7% Black [professors] and 3% Hispanic [professors].” Similarly, J16 added valued fact regarding Black MFT students when she said, “Because when it comes to retention rate, we’re [Black females] one of the highest rates. We don’t finish and a lot of that is because of the lack of support we get...The fact that when I look back at the people who get hired at my program, they all seem to be more of the White students that have good relationships with certain professors who have power.”

J15 mentioned having one non-White professor which was different from her past experiences. “I came from a school that was all Black so that kind of give me another incentive to at least get to understand White America.”

Table 4: Theme 1. Perceptions of the world: The Program**Selected examples of coded statements and related formulated meanings**

Freedom: to create oneself and understand the effects of choices	Five of the six co-researchers spoke about their decision to attend the MFT doctoral programs.
	J14: I don't know if I was looking so much about the professor as I went into the program. I was focused more on what the program would offer.
	J15: My most positive experience was actually going and touring the campus and deciding to come. It was the idea that, 'we welcome anyone.' ...at least at first, that's how it felt. I think that encouraged me to go.
	J16: I was prepared to know this was going to be something if I want it I'm going to fight for because when it comes to PhDs, there's only 1% of us.
Responsibility: where change can take place	Five of the six co-researchers spoke about their decision to attend the MFT doctoral programs.
	J11: But out of the five Black students PhD levels who did graduate from [institution's name], one was able to get [a professor job]...And there's quite a number who are Black who graduated and not one of them except this recent one
	J12: Some of the changes that could be made need to be made more in a programmatic level rather than an individual professor level. I think if it's made at that level and implemented as a policy.
	J15: I think when you come into this program, there needs to be some conversation about how this journey is about being an individual; how this relationship is about us getting to know each other, but know it is more about getting to know yourselves
Facticity: factual statements related to the culture of the MFT doctoral programs and black students	Five of the six co-researchers mention information about MFT stats for Black students.
	J15: I've never experience what's it's like to have a Black professor
	J13: I think looking at percentage....I am aware that the marriage therapy field is more than 90% White...It's 90% [Caucasian professors] then about 7% Black [professors] and 3% Hispanic [professors].
	J16: Because when it comes to retention rate, we're [Black females] one of the highest rates. We don't finish and a lot of that is because of the lack of support we get.

Theme 2. Perceptions of Others: The White professors. Since attending the program, co-researchers had more interactions with their White professors than any other race. The co-researchers verbalized their experiences with White professors. Based on their reports, two sub-themes originated: (1) isolation and (2) connectedness.

Isolation. Existential isolation relates to both interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). The co-researchers spoke about being emotionally distant along with physically distant from their White professors (Allen, 1992; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Love, 1993; Miller & Stone, 2011). Based on their experiences, the Black MFT doctoral degree holders were able to development of their own strength as a result of the isolation. The theme of isolation surfaced after reviewing the co-researchers answers to questions from the semi-structured interview such as “How do you think having a White professor hindered you?” and “What negative experience, if any, did you [they] have with a White professors?”

Five of the six participants discussed feeling isolated from their White professors. Out of these five, four of them described a negative memory stemming from a public experience instead of a private encounter between the participant and the White professors. For example, J11 recalls feeling isolated in the classrooms amongst her peers. She said, “There’s one professor, in particular, that teaches a class and it was three Black students myself included and the rest were White students. He never looked at us he never called on us if we raised our hands for a question. He focused primarily on the White students.” She continued expressing receiving a low score despite in a project having rave reviews from colleagues: “We did a project and even all the other students were saying that our project was one of the best because it really highlighted what

he taught throughout the whole semester. We still got a low grade compared to one group who got an A and the project was incomplete. That was something we'll always remember.”

Another classroom experience is from J12. She verbalized, “Yes, I think there are some White professors who feel that they ought not to be--I don't want to use the word ‘challenged’ because that sounds confrontational-- but asked questions. So if a situation...I'll give you a real life situation: We're in the lecture and the professor is delivering a lecture and...I would also question out of curiosity out of not knowing and automatically this professor became defensive to the point where you know other students looked at me thinking I was going to respond to that professor being defensive, but I wasn't. I really wanted to know...you know...And I think that was really a negative experience that I could've fed into, but I didn't because my question really came out curiosity....When I look at my PhD now and I think okay it is not reflected in my PhD but on my transcripts when you see one B amongst all A's that speaks volumes.”

Two participants spoke about doing important individual presentations that resulted in an experience of isolation. For example, J14 said, “I remember doing a presentation, it was a very important presentation. Very, very important presentation....And the other professor, in front of everybody, I don't remember what it was, but he didn't agree with one portion of what I was presenting and he proceeded to argue with me....And I remember from that point on, because originally I have very fond feelings for this professor. But after that I was just ‘yeah, yeah, I'm not really sure.’”

In concurrent, J16 had a similar experience, “I think it was negative for the fact that, not only were there her own colleagues there, but there was an outsider because I had a different person from another university on my committee as well as people in my family. It was evident how combative she was, not only she was combative, she was uninformed as to what my topic

was or the question...” She also explained that she realized another form of isolation with White professors. “Because there was a lot of disconnect when it came to behaviors, when it came to, I would say empathy and understanding, and also when it came to teaching about how the impact of differences are important to talk about and to be uncomfortable talking about when it comes to subjects, and comes to supervision and clients.”

Two participants added that isolation occurred as a result of writing skills. J15 mentioned that her negative experience with White professors was related to her writing abilities. “A negative experience I had with a professor was with my writing. I’m still struggling with my writing. Being bilingual, I think in one language but write in a different language. So I think that journey was difficult for me because I think the expectation was you have to know certain things and because I didn’t learn how to write very well and the schools I went to didn’t really prepare me so I pretty much taught myself how to write so I think that journey was difficult.”

J14 reiterated J15 when she too mentioned that at times, isolation occurred with White professors because of writing. “So in that way, I felt like sometimes if I wrote a paper for this professor, it didn’t feel like me.”

J13 was the only participant who denied having a negative experience with White professors. Her experience was different from the other participants in that her negative experience was with a Black professor leading to isolation. She mentioned that after completing a presentation, the Black Professor provided private feedback. “There might be challenges on how I could do something different, but I can’t call a negative experience. I would call it, ‘more growth’. What I did have was a negative experience with a Black professor...That experience I think was rude and disrespectful. Um, part of it, I remember having to do a presentation

and...then finding me at the end of the presentation she met me in the parking lot and told me that, 'I was boring.' I thought that was disrespectful."

Connectedness. In addition to experiencing isolation with White professors, all 6 Black doctoral MFT co-researchers were able to report experiencing periods of connectedness. Connectedness in existentialism is having a fondness for another human being that leads to feeling connected to the person. The Black MFT doctoral degree holders spoke about connectedness usually after being asked, "Describe a positive experience you had with a White professor."

J11 "I think one professor really took a great interest in my research topic...so this one of two professors really took an interest and was really excited so when I needed more support and guidance outside my own chair and other community members, it really helped to talk to the professor."

Connectedness occurred for J13 said when she received positive responses from White professors: "They were open to listen and to guide me in my study, um, they were able identify my strengths and to challenge my weaknesses and to encourage growth and that, I appreciated...I think overall they helped with my growth and my development academically as well as personally." She continued to express that connectedness was achieved because the White professors were open-minded. "And I think the professors that I came in contact with were exposed to certain dynamics and they were into more system building and they were system oriented that they had a more open mind. They helped individuals to find themselves and to find their strengths." J13 was able to specify a White professor with whom she was able to maintain a relationship, even post-graduation. "I've maintained a positive relationship with my department head who was the chair for my dissertation, and I've worked with her a year and a half. I've

gotten close. I have worked with my clinical professor who was Caucasian so you build those relationships, and over time they take you to another level of what is it that you need to do and help you to reflect.” She added, “When there were challenges and I stepped outside of myself and requested help, I found that they were open and willing to help me move to another level.”

J14 shared that her connectedness with White professors was due to their ability to be dynamic lecturers, who were funny and that were relatable. She added that she enjoyed the praise and compliments she received from the White professors. “I was like, ‘wow really, they said all that. That was surprising! Huh! It was a good confidence boost um, to hear the confidence the White professor had in what I do in my ability. So those are some of the things that have been good with some of the White professors that I had.” Moreover, J14 mentioned that connectedness occurred between her and a White professor in that, “She was very intentional, looked me in the eye, and was very sincere and said, ‘I feel so safe when you’re in the room.’ And there was something about that statement that made me think, ‘I’m supposed to be doing this.’

J15 expressed appreciation to all of her professors regardless of their races. “And I think the more I think about it, I pretty much am thankful that I had people who were willing to take on that journey with me and be respectful of my journey.”

J16 explained that connectedness occurred during supervision, “I can remember one particular professor, when it came to supervision, because they had a different background, ethnic wise and religion wise and it helped the consult really well. So I think that was beneficial. So that would be the most helpful thing about having White professors.” She added that the most positive experience she had was with a professor who challenged her. “I think my most positive experience in the PhD program would be the professor who challenged me to be...who said to

humble my smartness—which is interesting—because at the time, he recognized how that I knew a lot of stuff, but I needed to sit back and be open to learning more and sharing that with other people. So I think that motivated me to just work a little harder in a different way. I think that was the best experience and I think that actually changed the dynamic of our relationship. At first, I thought it was a "butt heads" kind of situation, but it actually turned out to be that this person really sees my potential in a different way.”

Three participants mentioned that connectedness was achieved when they received validation or praise. J15: “But, she congratulated me on the fact that I was able to pick up on something that she probably would not have.”

J12 wanted to provide a single most positive experience, but did not provide the race of the professors, “And this professor said to me, she said, I know the level of your work it’s fortunate that you’ve written papers for me before’ and she said, ‘Whatever you give me, it’s an A.”

Three participants added their narratives or discussed feelings connected with professors who were a different race than White professors. J12 stated, “Off the top my head, not on the same level, I have had positive experiences with White professors in particular. But not on the same level as I did with [name], the Black professor.” She did not elucidate on her positive experiences with White professors. Instead, she provided detailed description with her Black professor. “Because there were times where I ran out of steam, but she was still going...I remember every other week, meetings were scheduled for bi-weekly, and there wasn’t one meeting that [Black professor’s name] cancelled. There were some I wanted to cancel. In terms of how my experience was with her and White professors, It’s almost as if they are

incomparable. It's like as [White professor's name] would say: 'comparing apples to pears.' You can't compare them because they're such different experiences. They're so different."

J15 spoke about having a Latin professor and recalled feeling connected. She explained, "He brought a lot of intricate details that I was not used to hearing. So it was really good to hear that diverse way of looking at people, their culture where they're from, their language, the food. That was really good to hear because I don't think I got that at all."

J16 stated, "I think the difference is there was more understanding because the professors who were non-White had a...they seemed to be able to relate a little differently...relate a lot differently, especially the Black ones in particular because they could understand the struggle because they were able to go back the place of being what it was like to earn their degrees. Even with my Hispanic professors, they were just...there was a level of understanding that happened that they were willing to understand and it wasn't always smooth beginning because I remember one Hispanic professor that we kinda butted heads and now we are the best of ...we enjoy seeing each other. I think it was just willingness to understand a different type of relationship. I think that happens. The Black professors in general were interested in reaching out and making sure the relationship happened."

Three participants discussed how they attempt to connect as present professors with their current students. J13 mentioned that she desires to connect with her students much like the White professors connected with her in the MFT doctoral program. J15 said, "Oh yeah! Even now, I do that with my students: 'I'm here for you. I'm a vessel. I can only do the best I can with what I know.'"

J16 said, "Now teaching, I understand. You're always busy, but you have to be intentional about the student relationship because they really look up to you for that guidance in

the future. I still have students who email me, who I haven't seen in years about their recommendation letters or just telling me, 'thank you so much for the impact.'"

Table 5: Theme 2: Perceptions of the others: White Professor**Selected examples of coded statements and related formulated meanings**

Isolation: emotionally distant along with physically distant from professors	Five of the six participants discussed feeling isolated from their White professors. Out of these five, four of them described a negative memory stemming from a public experience instead of a private encounter between the participant and the White professors.
	J11: There's one professor, in particular, that teaches a class and it was three Black students myself included and the rest were White students. He never looked at us he never called on us if we raised our hands for a question. He focused primarily on just the White students.
	J12: Yes, I think there are some White professors who feel that they ought not to be--I don't want to use the word 'challenged' because that sounds confrontational-- but asked questions...
	J13:Um, part of it, I remember having to do a presentation and...then finding me at the end of the presentation she met me in the parking lot and told me that. 'I was boring.'
	J14: So In that way, I felt like sometimes if I wrote a paper for this professor, it didn't feel like me.
Connectedness: is having a fondness for another human being that leads to feeling connected to the professors	6 Black doctoral MFT co-researchers were able to report experiencing periods of connectedness
	J11: I think one professor really took a great interest in my research topic...it really helped to talk to the professor.
	J13: They were open to listen and to guide me in my study, um, they were able identify my strengths and to challenge my weaknesses and to encourage growth and that, I appreciated...
	J16: He recognized how that I knew a lot of stuff, but I needed to sit back and be open to learning more and sharing that with other people. So I think that motivated me to just work a little harder in a different way.
	J12: I have had positive experiences with White professors in particular. But not on the same level as I did with [name], the Black professor...Because there were times where I ran out of steam, but she was still going.
	J15: So it was really good to hear that diverse way of looking at people, their culture where they're from, their language, the food. That was really good to hear because I don't think I got that at all.
	J16: I think the difference is there was more understanding because the professors who were non-White had a...they seemed to be able to relate a little differently...relate a lot differently.

Theme 3. Perceptions of becoming self: The participant. All the participants agreed that they were impacted by the White professors. However, they included that they perceived themselves in a particular way which permitted them to view their experiences with the White professors the way they did. Based on their narratives, 3 subthemes emerged: (1) Authenticity (2) Angst, (3) and Self-responsibility.

Authenticity. Based on their experiences with White professors and marriage and family therapy programs, each co-researcher spoke about her ability to create their conscious selves. “Being in touch with one’s inner self, knowing one’s self, having sense of one’s own identity and then living in accord with one’s sense of one’s self is being authentic. To be authentic, people need to make themselves as they want to be. They must assert their will in the choices made when confronted by possibilities. Being attuned to one’s own experiences rather than interpreting the world through institutionalized concepts and abstractions makes people authentic individuals” (Steiner and Reisinger, 2005, pg. 300.) The co-researchers explained their authenticity in their education, professional and person plans. The themes were related to their responses to the following questions: “How did having a White professor affect your educational plans?; How did having a White professor affect your professional plans?; and How did having a White professor affect your personal plans?”

Educational. In reference to educational plans, J11 said, “I don’t know if it’s the school itself, I can’t say if it was the professors being overworked but many of my colleagues and I, we felt, and I say we because we’ve talked about this every time we get together, a kind of dragged on because we were the one who fighting to get the courses; get the professors’ responses.” J12 shared about developing her awareness of understanding Black Americans during class. “And

not being Black American myself, I had to do tons and tons of research...you know...a lot of research...to understand the African American experience myself.”

J13 mentioned that having White professors assisted her in remaining focused. “I was able to get through the program in the time that was allotted. I think also that ...when there were challenges and I stepped outside of myself and requested help.”

Three co-researchers denied that their authenticity in education was influenced by White professors. J14 “My educational plans? I think I was influenced in the beginning.” She elucidated on ways she incorporated family systems to the corporate world.

Similarly, J15 replied, “I don’t think it affected me in any way because I already knew what I wanted. I wanted to work with people from my community. And I wanted to enhance an understanding for people who are Black and Latino because there wasn’t a lot written and I started on that journey and I finished my dissertation on that. It really didn’t affect me in any way.”

J16 also said the lack of impact was due to minimal diversity of the races of the professors. “I don’t think they really affected it...you can count the amount of non-White professors...I knew it was going to be a challenge even though...from the onset it looked like it was going to be an inviting experience and come to find out it was that inviting.”

Professional. Three co-researchers mentioned that professors were not part of developing their authenticity in regards to professional plans. J11 said, “I didn’t include them in my professional plans. I just knew they were teaching me something I needed to learn so I could get my degree.” J12 explained she achieved her original professional goal with little impact from White professors: “Because when I was, probably quite early on in the program that’s what I said I wanted to do was to go out there and have my own private practice which is like I said to you

why I ended up here because when I was ready to go home, the opportunity came up for me to join a private firm, which is what I did.”

J16 stated that White professors did not influence her professional plans. “Professionally, that’s a thing that’s lacking. It’s something I continue to try....I have to create if I want to. It’s not something that’s done or happens. I can’t say that I can call a lot of them back and get some mentoring or continued guidance, which is what I’d hoped for at the end.”

J13 was detailed in explaining it was a combination of White professors and challenging herself which impacted her professional plans. "I cannot put it down to just having a professor impacting my professional plan. I think there was a combination of things: being exposed to the professors, being exposed to program requirements, getting information of what it takes to grow in the field, being exposed to new ideas, and to also wanting to challenge yourself with looking towards doing...”

White professors affected J14’s professional plans minimally. She expressed, “So I guess, just knowing other areas. So they influenced my plans by me being aware there are other areas that this degree could be useful for. Not just, again, mental health, individual and or family counseling but on a broader scale.”

J15 explained that some White professors were helpful with diversity topics. “Even some of the White professors were very in tuned with diversity so I pretty much dealt with them and consulted with them when it came to diversity.”

Personal. There are multiple views on the impact White professors had on the co-researchers. A couple of the co-researchers communicated indifferent in the impact of having White professors. J13. “Because we are not just one individual with just one aspect of our life, but we are so multi-faceted that it’s hard to pull out any one particular aspect and say this is it. My academic, my

personal, my spirituality, my profession is just who I am as a person and I think every area, everyone that I've come in contact with whether it be clients, or professors, have impacted me, with who I am today and who I am becoming.”

J15 “My personal plans?...I think it affected it in a way where I saw them doing what they wanted to do in their specific field so I think they kinda give me that idea, ‘if they can do it then I can do it.’

Half of the co-researchers denied White professors modified their authenticity. J12 said, “And I think about how a White professor helped me or deterred me from making personal decisions. I don't think that they impacted the decision-making process at all.

J14 also denied being influenced in her personal plans. “Personal plans. I don't there's...no...I didn't talk about personal things with my White professors...with any professor, really.”

J16 mentioned “I don't really think it affected my personal plans because I had already knew that was going to be part of the process, kind of, not becoming another stereotype for what they see happen with Black PhD, especially female PhDs.”

One co-researcher voiced that it is the White professors who are more impacted by them than the other way around. J11 “I think some White professors are very...some pleasantly or not surprised when Blacks make it and graduate. There are some that are really excited, but there are a few that...are...just like, ‘wow she made it.’ But there is also the sense that you know they're not going to get the jobs the White PhD students who are graduate are going to get....you know the teaching.

Angst. Co-researchers spoke about their difficulties with White professors leading to angst in the way they perceived becoming into their self or identity. Angst seemed to appear as a

sub-theme based on the co-researcher's replies to "How did having White professors hinder you?"

J11 mentioned having experienced negative experience that affected her forming her identity. "For example, prior to graduating from [institution name], there were three White students who graduated before us and they were students with us so we knew the caliber of them doing therapy; their caliber of work; and we were totally floored when we saw them teaching. And it did not surprise us when some of the students will have them as professor started protesting and writing letters to the Dean saying that they're wasting their money on these newly hired."

J12 mentioned that she was unsettled by the having a low number of non-White professors. She replied, "I think that you know as Black people we are underrepresented in the world of academia."

Half of the co-researchers discussed their denial of experiencing angst as it relates to developing self as a result of having White professors. J13 "It's more in terms of seeing the different perspectives of people. I think it was more interesting generally seeing people's view, and how they respond to individual. I think because my major in my undergraduate was history, so I was aware of what happened between Black and White. And having gone through it, I've gotten to a certain level, where I was seeing people as people. That I feel that regardless of whatever race an individual is; that if there are differences even the same people from the same race will treat people in a negative or in a positive light. So I think by my graduate studies, and by my Ph.D. I was aware that there might be a degree of prejudice, but I think I was open to the experience that people are people....So I was investing myself in the program into doing what I

needed to do; what would give me results to and not so much looking as to the response from a professor.”

Similar to J13, J14 denied being hindered by having a White professor. She too experienced angst with a Black professor while she was co-professor in a diversity class. “Now, I have to teach someone how to be respectful of people that are different and that was frustrating because I didn’t feel like, I didn’t feel like that class was for me, basically. If I can say that. Did I learn some things out of that class, of course, about some other races, but nothing, you know, that I felt wasn’t ready kind of common sense to me and where I’m from....I had to like the person to back up the professor. So it was almost like I was the co-facilitator. I felt that. Not that I actually did that that often.”

J15, “I don’t think I looked at it as hindering just because I had so many good mentors that were African American. I liked it more as individual who can help me to get to where I needed to go. I think that came from just how I was raised: everybody could offer you something no matter who they are. So I really didn’t come into it that way. Also, my culture, we’re multicultural, multi ethnic so it wasn’t like I never had White professors.”

J16 explained numerous times that her angst developed due to witnessing professors being uncomfortable conversing about certain topics. “That was because not all of the White professors were interested in challenging themselves to talk about those uncomfortable conversations. So you just sit back sometimes and be like, ‘well I see this’ but then you either wouldn’t raise your hand or just let it go because it wasn’t worth the fight to through them for that understanding.” Instead, it was J13 who explained her angst was with a Black professor: “What I did have was a negative experience with a black professor and that more has always caused me to reflect and go back to how it is that I view that people regardless of whatever race

they are, still have within them to treat people especially whether or not your from.....when there are differences whether there be color, culture, economics status, education, or whatever, if a person has within them to treat you negative, it will always come out.....I think it might be that being from a different background than this black professor, then treatment was different as oppose to if it was from...the person from the United States.”

Autonomy. The sub-theme of autonomy arose from the reactions when the co-researchers were asked, “How did having a White professor in the PhD program benefit you? Along with “What else would you would you like to add about your relationship with White professors?” In existentialism, autonomy is taking responsibility for personal choices.

J11 made repeated statements in regards to choosing to rely little on the professors as she completed the program. “Honestly, I did not give them that much credit. Again, I just really focused on why am I here? What am I trying to get? Down the years, what am I paying student loans for?”

J12, similarly, mentioned being impacted little by the race of the professors, especially White professors because she decided to seek higher education on her own. “Because I’m not sure it’s the White professor that benefit me. I think when you get to our level of study, you are so responsible for your education and for your learning and so I think....you know...professors teach and it is up to you to learn.” She continued to share, “I am one of these Black people that see myself as equal. I’m not using the color blind approach to say that I’m denying my color because I’m very proud of being Black. But what I’m saying about seeing myself as being equal is there’s nothing a White person can accomplish that I can’t accomplish.” Moreover J12 said, “I had some experiences in the program that really shaped the person that I am today. Some that changed the person that I am today. I’m not necessarily convinced that they had to do with White

professors as such, but I think they had to do with my entire experience on the program and when I think about the White professors, like I said overall, I had a good experience with all of them.”

J13 continued, “So, I think in the same way that I wouldn’t allow negativity about my spirituality to prevent me from accepting the God that I serve and who loves me that I am not at the place to allow even negative behavior responses to deter me from...what I think God has for me as a part of His purpose for my life. So even though I may come in contact with negative influence I see, based on my experiences, I have come in contact with negative influence, regardless of my race. And so what I think I don’t allow myself to get to a place where bitterness drives me, but rather than being bitter based on a history that I cannot change, I get better and embrace the experiences and whatever I can do to impact another person’s life whether you be Black, White, yellow, pink or green--I’ll do it.”

Similar to J12 and J13, J14 denied that her perception of self was reflected by specifically White professors. However she explained that exposure to White people assisted in her development of autonomy. “So I think the more interactions that Black Americans have with people who may be...who are Caucasian...who are quote unquote judging them, but allowing them to feel comfortable and build trust. The easier it is for them to be able to walk into their own therapy room and feel comfortable with someone who is different.”

J16 had a parallel response to J14. J16 explained that she was able to widen her perspective by having White professors. “They were able to give a different perspective. So I think that was beneficial.”

It was J15 who explained that she was aware of her autonomy and that her experience with White professors had little influence on her. “I never let it change even if I felt something

wasn't working. I kinda still took on that perspective: that I chose this journey and I'm going to have to work through whatever the issues I had with whomever which I really hardly ever had issues with anyone...And take it as a positive and learn from every encounter I had, it didn't matter what it was." J15 elucidated that she knew herself well and took responsibility for herself. "I've always been in complicated relationships because I'm a complicated person. I've always taken things from a complicated point. So let's just meet where we are and see what happens. I won't look at you for who you are or what you think you are. I'm just going to look at you and see what I can get from you. And what you can offer me to where I need to go. And then that eliminated me being whatever and that person being whatever. I always made professors feel comfortable and I think it was my job to do that just because I was different...Yes, I took a lot of the responsibility on myself. Yes...I do the opposite. The expectation is on me and not on the professor. It's cultural because in my culture the professor is there and you're supposed to access them and you're supposed to respect them whatever they've been through no matter who they are. Even though you're from the same culture doesn't necessarily mean you have the same experience...I pretty much want my journey to be what I want. I wanted to create my own story and my own journey. I didn't want anyone to interfere with that."

Table 6: Theme 3. Perceptions of becoming self: The Participants**Selected examples of coded statements and related formulated meanings**

Authenticity: Being attuned to one's own experiences rather than interpreting the world through institutionalized concepts and abstractions makes people authentic individuals	<i>Educational</i>
	J11: We were the one who fighting to get the courses; get the professors' responses.
	J12: And not being Black American myself, I had to do tons and tons of research....you know...a lot of research...to understand the African American experience myself.
	J13: I was able to get through the program in the time that was allotted. I think also that ...when there were challenges and I stepped outside of myself and requested help.
	J15: I don't think it affected me in any way because I already knew what I wanted.
	<i>Professional</i>
	J11: I didn't include them in my professional plans. I just knew they were teaching me something I needed to learn so I could get my degree.
	J15: Even some of the White professors were very in tuned with diversity so I pretty much dealt with them and consulted with them when it came to diversity.
	J16: Professionally, that's a thing that's lacking. It's something I continue to try...I have to create it if I want to. It's not something that's done or happens. I can't say that I can call a lot of them back and get some mentoring or continued guidance, which is what I'd hoped for at the end.
	<i>Personal</i>
J12: And I think about how a White professor helped me or deterred me from making personal decisions. I don't think that they impacted the decision-making process at all.	
J15: I think it affected it in a way where I saw them doing what they wanted to do in their specific field so I think they kinda give me that idea, 'if they can do it then I can do it.	
J13: My academic, my personal, my spirituality, my profession is just who I am as a person and I think every area, everyone that I've come in contact with whether it be clients, or professors, have impacted me, with who I am today and who I am becoming.	
Angst: difficulties with professors leading to barrier in the way they perceived becoming into self	Half of the co-researchers said they experienced angst and 3 denied experiencing angst
	J12: I think that you know as Black people we are underrepresented in the world of academia.
	J13: What I did have was a negative experience with a black professor....I think it might be that being from a different background than this black professor, then treatment was different as oppose to if it was from...the person from the United States.
	J16: That was because not all of the White professors were interested in challenging themselves to talk about those uncomfortable conversations.
Autonomy: taking responsibility for personal choices	Half of the co-researchers voiced the role professors played in helping them develop autonomy.
	J11: Honestly, I did not give them that much credit. Again, I just really focused on why am I here? What am I trying to get? Down the years, what am I paying student loans for?
	J12: Because I'm not sure it's the White professor that benefit me. I think when you get to our level of study, you are so responsible for your education and for your learning and so I think....you know...professors teach and it is up to you to learn.
	J14: So I think the more interactions that Black Americans have with people who may be...who are Caucasian...The easier it is for them to be able to walk into their own therapy room and feel comfortable with someone who is different.

Theme 4. Advice for Black Students. Based on their experiences, Black MFT doctoral degree holders had lasting words to current or prospective Black MFT doctoral students. The co-researchers initiated conversations related to advice for Black students when they were asked, Is there anything you'd like to add about relationship with the White professors? And Is there any other question you think maybe I should have asked that I did not ask? The sub-themes which emerged were (1) dealing with prejudice and (2) taking ownership. J11 did not provide any responses geared towards students.

Dealing with prejudice. J12 alleged that racism still exists. "There are things that as a Black person that we would have to work harder for because we are in this racist society." J13 voiced that students could rise above prejudice, "I think as a Black student, we also need to be open to differences that there might be times when in order for us to move to another level, we will have to work to seemingly prove ourselves because it's what existed in history. And you cannot erase history by just wishing... because it existed. I think once we are able to acknowledge it, and determine a path that we want to go, we can excel above what seems to be prejudice and even though it may exist, we don't have to allow it to keep us down or to hinder our development..."

J14 suggested that students work on their confidence as they deal with prejudice. "For students, would just be to continue to feel confident with interacting with people who don't look like you, but you can have trust that they value you, your opinion, your thought, the way you talk, the way you dress, the way your hair is...Whatever it is. Just help build confidence. That does help. This particular profession isn't necessarily the easiest for Blacks and you know you get people in your therapy room. They don't like you already based upon, you know, you're Black, in my case, you're Black and you're female and you look a certain way. Your skin tone is

darker so that might make me a little bit uncomfortable and you got you have your hair that's not straight."

Taking ownership. J12 stated that students should take the opportunity to learn from their professors. "I really think that learning is a reciprocal relationship. Students learn from professors in the same way that professors learn from students. I learned a great deal from the students who I taught at home. Every student helps you to grow, too, as a professor. We as students...we...I'm taking myself back. We really contribute to their development as professors. Be open to that because you just never know what it is you are taking away."

J13 voiced, "I think as we grow and develop, we have to understand who we are as a people; we have to know what we're about; and we have to also not to try to be somebody else but recognize that 'I'm Black.'"

J15 urged those students to take responsibility for their journey. "I think it's more of not them teaching us, I think it's us teaching ourselves. I think when you come into this program, there needs to be some conversation about how this journey is about being an individual; how this relationship is about us getting to know each other, but know it is more about getting to know yourselves. I think the more you get to know yourself, the more you know your clients. I think yes, it might hinder a lot of people, but if you come into this thinking that people owe you something, I think it creates a difficulty in getting where you need to be."

Table 7: Theme 4. Advice for Black Students.

Selected examples of coded statements and related formulated meanings

Dealing with prejudice	3 participants stated ways future and current Black students can deal with prejudice.
	J12: There are things that as a Black person that we would have to work harder for because we are in this racist society.
	J13: I think as a Black student, we also need to be open to differences that there might be times when in order for us to move to another level. And you cannot erase history by just wishing... because it existed. I think once we are able to acknowledge it, and determine a path that we want to go, we can excel above what seems to be prejudice and even though it may exist...
	J14: For students, would just be to continue to feel confident with interacting with people who don't look like you, but you can have trust that they value you, your opinion, your thought, the way you talk, the way you dress, the way your hair is...Whatever it is.
Taking Ownership	3 participants explained ways future and current Black students may take ownership as Black MFT students interacting with White professors.
	J12: I really think that learning is a reciprocal relationship. Students learn from professors in the same way that professors learn from students.
	J13: I think as we grow and develop, we have to understand who we are as a people; we have to know what we're about; and we have to also not try to be somebody else but recognize that 'I'm Black.
	J15: I think it's more of not them teaching us, I think it's us teaching ourselves. I think when you come into this program, there needs to be some conversation about how this journey is about being an individual; how this relationship is about us getting to know each other, but know it is more about getting to know yourselves. I think the more you get to know yourself, the more you know your clients.

Theme 5. Advice for White professors. Due to their extensive experience with White professors before graduating with a doctorate from a COAMFTE program, all the co-researchers had feedback for White professors. Four sub-themes related to advice for White professors emerged after reviewing the responses from the following questions: What do you look for in a professor?; How does your relationship with White professors compare with other professors of a different race?, What do you think White professors need to know about teaching Black students? What changes, if any, do you think White professors need to make when teaching Black students? Is there anything you'd like to add about relationships with the White professors? How comfortable do you think the professors were about discussing race? and "Is there any other question you think I should have asked that I did not ask?" The four themes are (1) Attributes; (2) Intentionality; (3) Recognition; and (4) Introspection.

Attributes. The characteristic of White professors was important to the co-researchers. The co-researchers discussed their desired attributes from professors. For example, J11 wanted knowledgeable professors: "I really looked for their true interest and knowledge about the topic and/or subject of the course that I was taking. I looked for what I can learn from them. I looked if they were receptive to my asking questions and how they answered them. I really look for them to see an interest in me as a student in their class."

J12 added that professors should be "adaptable so as to embrace people of different levels of learning...but to also allow the learning process to be reciprocal, knowing that they can learn from me as much as I can learn from them. Also to allow students to learn at the pace that is comfortable for them." Also J12 added, "I think part of that...like I said...has to do with when a Black professor walks into a room with me, "wow, it's beautiful."

J16 mentioned wanting mentoring from professors. “I was looking for a professor who would be more than just a lecturer in class. But, someone who can be also an adviser and a mentor through the process because with getting the PhD, it's more of building relationships that last beyond that because of the journey that goes beyond the degree.”

Three of the six co-researchers (J13, J14, and J15) reported they had no preferred desired qualities from a professor. Instead, they were more interested in the program as a whole. Although J15 admitted to originally not thinking about the desired qualities, she now realized that she wanted professors who were compassionate. “I don't think I really thought about it, but I was hoping I would get somebody who was compassionate and empathetic to my journey in becoming a PhD student.”

Intentionality. Four out of the six co-researchers discussed that White professors need to be intentional with students. Intentionality means that professors are present and understanding of the people and the environment around them. According to J11, White professors need to be intentional with the clients' requests. “So I really think that if a client is coming in for help, it really doesn't matter who's sitting across from them but when they verbalized this is their preference I really think it needs to be respected. It doesn't need to be explored, ‘why does she want a Black therapist?’ ‘Is it because she's Black?’ Yea, Yea, experience will tell you that. So why not look at it as the client's preference. There's some underlying issue there perhaps versus it shouldn't matter the color of the therapist.”

J14 mentioned that a professor intentionally could produce long term effects unbeknownst to them. “So I think for White professor to be intentional and giving compliments. You never know what you could say to someone to keep them on the path or...make them think,

‘I can’t do this’ even if they’re doing fine.’ Even if someone is doing fine, it doesn’t mean they’re confident about what they’re producing.”

J15 said that she believes that professors need to be intentional in recalling their past experience as students so students are more willing to be comfortable with students. “But I think growth comes more when you understand yourself or put yourself in a position, ‘I was a student once and now I’m a professor. What was it like being someone in a new place or a new environment?’ And maybe have that conversation the first class so students feel comfortable and know that somebody’s willing to open up to them and allow them to explore that journey whatever it is from whatever culture they’re from relationship-wise because I think that relationship and feeling are no different for anyone no matter what color you are.”

J16 voiced similar thoughts as previous co-researchers. “I think it starts with just more intentional relationship between the student and the faculty. I do think that students should seek out those relationships. It’s not just a faculty driven thing. I also think when the faculty when they see student try to reach out, that they respond. And if they can’t or they don’t feel that same way, let the students know so they can find somebody else.

Recognition. Most of the co-researchers expressed the need for White professors to recognize the differences between students beyond their race. J11 wanted professors to understand differences exist. They really need to understand that there is a difference. When we talk about Bateson and ‘the difference that makes a difference,’ they really need to apply that statement in terms of they’re a White professors, these are Blacks. These are White students and Black students and how are they different. How are they learning what they’re learning and why should I be interested in a population they talk about that they want to go on and help and work with?”

J12 expressed that she wants professors to view the uniqueness of students. “One that understands that we are unique individuals so we learn differently.” She continued to say “First of all that when you see a Black face in front of you or a group of Black faces in front of you to make within group distinctions. As a White professor, I think what would really benefit them is know that not all Black people are African Americans. That's a personal thing...A very personal thing. Because until I speak, no one knows that I'm not African American. So as they stand in front of the class, the assumption they make is that all the Black faces are African American: I think what's important is that people are treated as unique individuals. So don't paint me with the same brush that you're going to paint American or a Jamaican or a Haitian American because I'm none of those. So you see so I think White professors could come from a position or take the start of identifying within group distinctions amongst Black faces in the classroom. Because for me, that speaks to one of the negative experiences I had that those within group distinctions weren't made and so it was automatically assumed that a Black face in the classroom is African American. And until I spoke, then they realized, I'm not African American. It's about treating people as unique individuals and also what comes along with that is acknowledging that with that uniqueness comes an experience and an experience that they can learn from so where as White professors here may have had a lot of exposure” She explained that White professors can learn more about students' individuality during orientation times or in the beginning of the classes by asking more questions. “But as you start to talk to people, find out who it is you're talking to so as questions are being answered. We read these chapters and we come to class and then we discuss the chapters. What is it that informs you? And so as a professor, it's teaching and then hearing something from a student. As in my case, ‘how they can come to know me as a unique individual’ is just to ask, ‘what is it that informs you? What's your frame of reference?’

Yes, that's why I think it's important for White professors to know...I don't think actually it's just about White professors and Black students. I think it's about it goes to a higher level: professors and students. Get to know your students as individuals. It may seem like a big task. But a situation like that, the one I just described, made all the difference because this professor knew the level of my work not just from previous work that I handed in but from my interactions in the classroom. You know, my contributions to the lectures. But I think generally it's important for professors to know students as unique individuals and what they bring to the classroom, and to the program, and to the lecturer...But I think when there's another layer added to it like Black student White professor that I think it's all the more important because like I said some of the individual experiences that I had was that the majority of the professors came into that classroom without making any within group distinctions so we were all African American until I spoke.”

J14 spoke about the impact of voicing awareness when it comes to acknowledging individualizing. “But for me, what makes the difference is the White professor actually seeing, and what I mean by seeing is: identifying, recognizing, verbalizing, something that that Black student has that’s special is very important. Because I know, again, you get a lot of compliments from everybody but there was something that was, like I said before, that was surprising and like, ‘awww,’ you know, when a White professor noticed something and verbalized it.”

J15 mentioned that professors getting to know students as individuals are getting to know their experiences. “I think White professors need to have that conversation with Black students: ‘But I don't know your Black experience, but I know what it is to have an experience, whatever that is.’ And I think that's what the conversation needs to be more of. Because no one will actually know about my experience because it's so individualized and I think this program is about meeting people where they're at. We preach that, but I don't think we do that as professors.

We don't meet our students where they're at. I think my suggestion would be to definitely understand what cultural background your students are from. Same way how we have to understand our client I think that's how professors need to understand their students. I think the relationship is parallel but we think of it as different.”

J16 concurred with previous co-researchers stating, “White professors need to understand that students are different, no matter their race or ethnicity or their cultural background, but getting an idea of how those things could affect the student faculty relationship and how especially students who are different need more support because we’re already feeling at a disadvantage and out of our environment. We're not supposed to be here if you look at it historically, and we are here. Make us feel as comfortable as possible in doing that.”

Introspection. The co-researchers mentioned that some White professors were unaware of their biases. One area that was discussed was White professors' comfort level when talking about race. Four co-researchers spoke about professors who were unaware of their discomfort when talking about race. J11 “I really think they really need to acknowledge that there is a high level of racism within their institution.” J12 mentioned that the White professors were somewhat uncomfortable with conversing on the topic of race. “I don’t think that they were that comfortable. Some of them were okay with it. Where we’re talking about levels of comfort, one being not comfortable at all and 10 being exceptionally comfortable, I would say, the majority of them were maybe at a 4.”

J15 mentioned that professors were dubious when conversing about race, but she made them feel comfortable. “I don’t think any of them were, but I was. All the professors were receptive with race because I was very careful on how I brought it up because not everything was racial, but everything was racial to me. Everything was racial to me because I was the only one

[Black student] so I tried to make sure that I always brought race into the conversation...they were very receptive to it.”

J16 stated that professors lacked comfort in discussing race. “Some of them...the ones that were... had, I wouldn't say an interest, but had an openness to anything that was different than you, I would feel more comfortable. Out of the seven that I can think about of having, I would say maybe one or two were that comfortable. The others, I would not discuss it with them because you knew from either the language they used or the examples they would give, they were farfetched from being culturally comfortable with difference and so when it comes to level of comfort, if there was a scale on it, they would be at the bottom end of that scale at the lowest part of the totem pole.” J16 further acknowledge professors colorblind approaches. “I think the first thing they need to do is to realize that they...the whole mentality of being colorblind is the worst thing they can be. Because that's not addressing the fact that they have their own biases and those biases can affect how they interact with students. We're all are affected by stereotypes whether you're Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, etc. It's just understanding where it fits for you in the spectrum and then consciously critiquing yourself all the time about how you interact in those relationships with students that don't look like you because there is a difference in how you treat them.... Colorblind does not mean you're not a racist. I just want that to be clear. It just means that you can still be prejudice against people.”

One of the co-researchers mentioned that professors should be aware of their ability to respect. J13 explained that professors should be aware of their ability to respect others. “When professors have difficulties with respecting another person’s perspective viewpoints and differences, I think that’s when we have problems and I didn’t really encounter it. But I know it exists. I think respect, openness, willingness to learn, willingness to understand you are not the

expert on people's desires and their dreams, but you might be just a segment, a conduit for them to move to another level, if you're able to understand that and to respect the individual then how many can be developed."

One out of the six co-researchers said that professors need to be aware of their ability to empower students. According to J14, "I think when you have any professor who feels like they're in your corner and championing you, it is great. But I think when it comes to White professors, I think both White, Black whatever, professors I think it's great to have that. But when it comes to White professors, when they do that it feels surprising. And because of that element of like wow, you actually noticed that, that can help push you forward I guess whether it's confidence or whatever."

Table 8: Theme 5. Advice for White professors.**Selected examples of coded statements and related formulated meanings**

Attributes: The characteristic of White professors was important to the co-researchers	Three of the six reported they had no preferred desired qualities from a professor.
	J11: I really looked for their true interest and knowledge about the topic and/or subject of the course that I was taking. I looked for what I can learn from them. I looked if they were receptive to my asking questions and how they answered them. I really look for them to see an interest in me as a student in their class.
	J16: I was looking for a professor who would be more than just a lecturer in class. But, someone who can be also an adviser and a mentor through the process because with getting the PhD, it's more of building relationships that last beyond that because of the journey that goes beyond the degree
	J12: I think part of that...like I said...is to do with when a Black professor walks into a room with me, "wow, it's beautiful."
Intentionality: professors are present and understanding of the people and the environment around them	Four out of the six co-researchers discussed that White professors need to be intentional with students.
	J11: So I really think that if a client is coming in for help, it really doesn't matter who's sitting across from them but when they verbalized this is their preference I really think it needs to be respected.
	J14: So I think for White professor to be intentional and giving compliments. You never know what you could say to someone to keep them on the path or...make them think, 'I can't do this' even if they're doing fine.
	J16: I think it starts with just more intentional relationship between the student and the faculty. I do think that students should seek out those relationships. It's not just a faculty driven thing. I also think when the faculty when they see student try to reach out, that they respond.
Recognition: recognizing the differences between students beyond race	5 of the co-researchers expressed the need for White professors to recognize the differences between students beyond their race
	J11: They really need to understand that there is a difference. When we talk about Bateson and 'the difference that makes a difference,' they really need to apply that statement...These are White students and Black students and how are they different.
	J12: First of all that when you see a Black face in front of you or a group of Black faces in front of you to make within group distinctions. As a White professor, I think what would really benefit them is know that not all Black people are African Americans....So you see so I think White professors could come from a position or take the start of identifying within group distinctions amongst Black faces in the classroom.
	J14: But for me, what makes the difference is the White professor actually seeing, and what I mean by seeing is: identifying, recognizing, verbalizing, something that that Black student has that's special is very important.
	J15: I think White professors need to have that conversation with Black students: 'But I don't know your Black experience, but I know what it to have an experience, whatever that is.' And I think that's what the conversation needs to be more of. Because no one will actually know about my experience because it's so individualized and I think this program is about meeting people where they're at. We preach that, but I don't think we do that as professors
Introspection: awareness of biases by White professors	4 co-researchers spoke about professors who were unaware of their discomfort when talking about race.
	J11: I really think they really need to acknowledge that there is a high level of racism within their institution.
	J13: When professors have difficulties with respecting another person's perspective viewpoints and differences, I think that's when we have problems and I didn't really encounter it. But I know it exists. I think respect, openness, willingness to learn, willingness to understand you are not the expert on people's desires and their dreams, but you might be just a segment, a conduit for them to move to another level.
	J16: Out of the seven that I can think about of having, I would say maybe one or two were that comfortable. The others, I would not discuss it with them because you knew from either the language they used or the examples they would give, they were farfetched from being culturally comfortable with difference and so when it comes to level of comfort, if there was a scale on it, they would be at the bottom end of that scale at the lowest part of the totem pole.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The primary objective from this study was to explore the views expressed by Black marriage and family therapist (MFT) doctoral degree holders in their interactions with White professors when they attend a Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAFMTE) program. The previous chapters delved into the problem, background, and the rationale to the study. The research begets questions and literature reviews were presented and reviewed. In order to gain a better perspective of the experiences of Black MFT degree holders, an existential phenomenological qualitative method was used to elucidate their experiences with White professors, while seeking for their voices to emerge from their narratives to provide the answer to the research question, “What were the experiences of Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors?” This chapter provides a summarization of the study and connection with previous studies that were discussed in chapter two. Limitations along with implications and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Co-researchers experience had varied meanings pertaining to the perception of the world: the program, perception of others: White professors, perception of self: participants, advice for Black students, and advice for White professors. These core existential issues permeating the co-researchers' lives were presented in detail in Chapter 4 by themes and sub-themes.

Discussion of the Findings

Five main themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews. This section will summarize the five main themes from the theoretical model of this study. The themes are linked with the research questions previously posed.

Perception of the world: The program

This particular theme discusses the existential viewpoint of Black MFT doctoral degree holders' perceptions of the COAMFTE program they attended. The three sub-themes which drawn are freedom, responsibility and facticity. COAMFTE (2014) accredits 22 universities for doctoral programs. With so many programs, students have the ability to choose the program best suited for them. Thus, Black MFT doctoral degree holders have freedom in the choices they make in selecting which university to attend. "Freedom means to be capable (Kierkegaard, 2007, p. 289)." Based on the narratives from the co-researchers, students exercised freedom when they chose the program. In joining a COAMFTE program, the co-researchers they did not consider the racial profile of professors, but were more concerned about academically and professionally benefiting from the program. In concurrence, Hertlein and Lambert-Shute (2007) mentioned that professors, but not because of their race, in general played a role in the decision to attend a doctoral program.

The co-researchers spoke on responsibility, which is a key idea in existentialism. The co-researchers' views on responsibility were related to their thoughts on the program and not in relation to their personal lives. In its familiar form, existential thinking focuses more on personal responsibility of one's self. "However, for the truly existing person, passion, not thought, is existence at its very highest: true knowing pertains essentially to existence, to a life of decision and responsibility (Kierkegaard, 2007, p. 59)." The co-researchers viewed their program as significant based on their testimonies and provided constructive criticism for improvements within their own MFT programs. Their feedback is consistent with a number of studies (Allen, 1992; Bouie, 2011; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Feagin, 1992; Felder, 2010; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; King, 1993; Kobrak, 1992; Love, 1993; McDowell, Fang, Brownlee, Young, and

Khanna, 2002; Nettles et al., 1986; Noguera, 2009; Thompson, 2006). Each co-researcher expressed that professors should be held to a higher standard of accountability by COAMFTE program standards as it relates to White professors interacting with Black students.

As the co-researchers describe their experience, they provided existential facticity. “We exist amidst a world of shared meanings and understandings in the social context as a mode of being human which exists tactically. Facticity refers to the idea that we are able to understand ourselves as bound up in our own as well as others’ destiny” (Conroy, 2003, p. 7). Some co-researchers provided factual statements about the COAMFTE programs which affected their perceptions. The statements were related to the ratio of Black MFT students and White professors. They also spoke on the limited exposure that Black MFT students have to Black professors, as well as professors of other races other than White. A couple of co-researchers spoke about the preference for White MFT students to be employed as professors, rather than Black students to be employed in academia which is similar to findings from studies completed by Miller and Stone (2011) as well as Wilson and Smith (1993).

Perceptions of others: The White professors

This theme is in relation to the co-researchers views with the White professors who taught them in the COAMFTE programs. Based on their narratives, the emerging sub-themes were isolation and connectedness.

Five out of the 6 co-researchers spoke on feeling isolated from their professors. Isolation in existentialism refers to thinking one is alone. Co-researchers spoke about thinking and feeling separated from their White professors (Allen 1992; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Felder, 2010, Inman et al., 2004; Love, 1993; Naman, 2009; Nettles et al., 1986; Noguera, 2009; Thompson, 2006; Wilson, 1993; Zirkel, 2002). Out of the five co-researchers, four of them spoke

on detachment that they experienced when giving the task to give public presentations, such as dissertations or group project presentations. Discussion about isolation surfaced when two co-researchers recalled private conversations they had with a White professor. Poor writing skills was another factor in which co-researchers felt isolated from their White professors.

While the feeling of isolation exists, however, all six co-researchers expressed also the feeling of being connected to White professors. In existentialism, connectedness permits individuals to have emotional security with others (Deuzen & Lacovou, 2013). For example, two of the six co-researchers mentioned they felt the most connected to White professors who demonstrated interests in their research topics (Allen 1992; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Clark et al., 2012; Felder, 2010, Inman et al., 2004; Love, 1993; Naman, 2009; Noguera, 2009; Thompson, 2006; Wilson, 1993; Zirkel, 2002). An individual co-researcher spoke on how the connectedness occurred when the White professors demonstrated their abilities to facilitate dynamic lectures, added humor, and displayed empathy on certain topics. Another co-researcher expressed gratitude for all of her professors regardless of their races while a third co-researcher spoke on receiving positive constructive criticism enabled her to feel connectedness with a White professor. Similarly, few co-researchers spoke about connectedness that they experienced when receiving praise and validation from their White professors. Additionally, three co-researchers spoke on connectedness in relations to their professors of different races other than White. The co-researchers, who are now professors, gave examples of ways they build connectedness with their current students.

Perceptions of self: The participants

As the co-researchers spoke about their experiences they reflected back on their own selves. "To be oneself existentially means to exist according to one's nature or essence, which

transcends day-to-day behavior or activities or thinking about self” (Steiner & Reisinger, 2005, p. 303). Their consistent narratives defined their identity as Black MFT doctoral degree holders. Based on these experiences, three sub-themes surfaced: authenticity, angst, and responsibility.

In existentialism, authenticity is the ontological argument for self. The co-researchers mentioned their ability to be aware of their authentic selves (2005). They were able to discuss their values, apart from the influences from the professors. The co-researchers described their views on the personal impact that White professors made on their authenticity as it relates to educational, professional, and personal goals.

One of the co-researchers said that she and her classmates advocated for applicable coursework which would enhance their skills as a marriage and family therapists. Yet another co-researcher indicated that she was well aware of who she was as a Black individual, but needed to do additional research on being a Black American, since that was different from her own identity. A third co-researcher credited a White professor who aided her to remain focus so she would graduate on time. The last three co-researchers denied fluctuations in their authenticity related to educational goals from their interactions with White professors.

The co-researchers clarified the over-all impacts White professors made on their professional goals. Two responded that being exposed to White professors, being part of the MFT program, and having the freedom of making personal choices provided meaning towards her professional goals (Miller & Stone, 2011). One co-researcher stated she learned to integrate diversity in the professional world. Three of them mentioned there was little impact made on their authenticity from White professors because they were already aware of their professional goals once they completed the doctoral programs. Their professional goals stemmed from placing value on themselves and their communities.

The last area associated with the sub-theme of authenticity is related to fulfilling personal goals. One co-researcher discussed that some White professors were shocked when Black students "made it" in both personal and professional goals because traditionally White professors have little expectations for Black students (Miller & Stone, 2011). Another co-researcher explained that she is continuously influenced by individuals she meets, regardless of race resulting in them impacting her authenticity. Yet, another co-researcher described that her authenticity of empowerment increased: as she watched White professors do well, she knew she could do the same. Three co-researchers acknowledged little effect in their views of authenticity as it relates to personal goals.

Another major theme derived from the interviews with the co-researchers is angst. In existentialism, angst is a dreadful feeling formed when providing meaning to experiences. Often angst is correlated with anxiety, but it can also refer to having a negative feeling (Heidegger, 1927; Jackson & Everts, 2010). For the purposes of the study, angst is the negative feeling or experiences Black MFT degree holders had with their White professors. Angst was experienced by two co-researchers who expressed frustrations with the many White MFT students attaining professor jobs over Black MFT students (Bourke, 2010; Clark et al., 2012; Felder, 2010, Miller and Stone, 2011). Another co-researcher explained the reason for developing angst was due to White professors being uncomfortable in presenting certain topics in the classroom setting. Three co-researchers denied developing angst based on their experiences with White professors. Out of these three, two disclosed having angst with the same Black professor. One explained her angst was directed towards the Black professor who reprimanded her after a presentation while the other co-researcher explained that the Black professor was "White-focused" to allegedly meet the needs of most of the student bodies in the classroom which consisted of White students.

The final theme related to the co-researchers' development of self is related to their autonomy or responsibility for own choices (Clark et al., 2012). One co-researcher described herself as "autonomous" because she made the choice to complete her doctorate on her own. A second co-researcher stated that she sought out White professors because they were helpful in providing a different perspective (Dee, 2004; Grier-Reed, Madyun, and Buckley, 2008; Miller and Stone, 2011). Most of the co-researchers explained that they perceive themselves to be capable of working on the MFT doctoral program on their own, but at times were intentional to seek assistance when needed from professors.

Advice for Black Students

Some of the co-researchers expressed advice to current or potential MFT Black students attending COAMFTE programs. Based on their narratives, two sub-themes surfaced. They are prejudice and ownership.

Concerning prejudice, three co-researchers discussed that racism and prejudice exists even at institutions that offer MFT programs (Love, 1993; McDowell et al., 2004; McDowell et al., 2003; Noguera, 2009; Stewart, 2001; Wilson & Stith, 1993). Out of these three co-researchers, two denoted that being confident, Black MFT students were the gateway to excel beyond presenting prejudices and racism. Regardless of the obstacles, they encouraged Black MFT students to be secure in their own skin to be the most authentic (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Inman et al., 2004; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Thompson & Alexander, 2006; Zirkler, 2002).

A few co-researchers also advised Black MFT students to take ownership. One of the co-researchers advised students to learn from their professors, therefore consequently the professors will learn from them (Merleau-Ponty & Baldwin, 2004). From the interview, two co-researchers explained that students need to self-explore and to improve their self-awareness skills. In

explaining self-exploration, one of the co-researchers explained that students who take the initiative of self-exploration would grow greatly in their ability to provide exceptional services to clients.

Advice for White Professors

The final theme from the interviews provides advice for White professors. From the interviews, four sub-themes materialized: attributes, intentionality, recognition, and introspection. Half of the co-researchers wanted their professors to have specific attributes (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Herlein & Lambert-Shute, 2007; Inman et al., 2004; Zirkler, 2002). Some of those attributes are interest in co-researcher's choice of topics were: adaptability, compassion, empathy, allowing students to learn at their pace, and ability to advise, mentor, and form lasting relationships beyond school.

Intentionality was another focus derived from the interviews with the co-researchers. Of the six co-researchers, four of them discussed the advice for intentionality as being consciously physically and emotionally present. One co-researcher believed that White professors need to be more intentional to the needs of clients, especially for the professor to understand that clients may have a racial preference for the therapist who treats them. Another co-researcher explained that professors' intentionality is noticeable by the compliments they gave students, which may have lasting effect on the students they teach. Two other co-researchers expressed that intentionality can be expressed by White professors if they recall their past experiences so that they are able to relate to current students as they develop the relationships.

A third sub-theme related to advice for professors is recognition (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Inman et al., 2004; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Thompson, 2006; Thompson & Alexander, 2006; Wilson & Stith, 1993; Zirkler, 2002). All of the co-researchers verbalized that White

professors need to recognize that there are differences between students. A co-researcher reiterated Bateson's idea of "the difference which makes the difference" to explain that each student—regardless of race—is different (Bateson, 1972). On further exploration, one co-researcher specified that White professors need to view students as unique individuals who learn differently and White professors need to make their distinctions obvious with their students. An additional co-researcher explained that White professors should verbalize the individuality they see with their students. Another co-researcher explained that White professors need to understand the cultural backgrounds of the students, in the same manner that marriage and family therapists get to know their clients. The last co-researcher explained that White professors demonstrate recognition of students by getting to know their backgrounds; this permits a better relationship between the Black students and White professors.

Lastly, several Black MFT doctoral degree holders provided advice for professors in the area of introspection (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Inman et al., 2004; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Thompson & Alexander, 2006; Zirkler, 2002). Half of the co-researchers advised White professors to be self-aware of their comfort level when discussing race. Co-researchers expressed that one area White professors need to be keen on the "high level of racism" existing throughout the program. Another co-researcher advised White professors to be more respectful, especially in areas where students have differing viewpoints from them.

Limitations of the study

This existential phenomenological qualitative study encompassed interviews from six Black female co-researchers who graduated from a COAMFTE doctoral program. All co-researchers, but one, graduated between the years of 2009-2014. There are some limitations to the current study, otherwise known as shortcomings or possible weaknesses of the research

(Creswell, 2006). One limitation was the gender of the co-researchers. There were no male participants available who inquired about participating in the study. Another limitation was that the pool of recruits graduated from the same institution in Florida. Black doctoral MFT students graduating from other COAMFTE programs were underrepresented in this inquiry. Obtaining information from doctoral degree holders from multiple COAFMTE programs may have enhanced the rich information gathered from the co-researchers' narratives.

Another limitation of the study is that there was no measure of the level of emotional or behavioral relationships with White professors from the co-researchers. Level of relationships was based on the co-researchers' ability to respond to semi-structured questions. The Black MFT doctoral degree holders' level of emotional and behavioral relationships with White professors may have had an effect on other aspects of their lives, which could then impact the kinds of experiences they had with White professors.

Last, my personal experience background may have been a limitation in the study. I had my own biases and presuppositions in interviewing and interpreting the data (Patton, 2002) because I am a Black female who is attending the same institution where the participants received their doctoral degrees. Although I attempted to ameliorate this affect upon the study by assessing the data and rigor in the phenomenological method through repeated reviews of the narratives when developing themes, biases may still exist. In addition, the co-researchers may have felt a need to answer in ways I expected.

Implications for Future Research

This study aimed at providing summaries of Black MFT doctoral degree holders experiences with White professors. The study relied on the co-researchers' recollections of past experiences throughout their enrollment at a COAMFTE doctoral program. Minimal research

exists on this subject, so there are implications for new practices and studies for Black MFT doctoral degree holders with White professors (Miller & Stone, 2011).

This study generated possibilities for future research in many areas. The most obvious research possibility is that the present population needs to be studied because minimal research is available for Black MFT students. Black MFT students are the second highest race population (after White students) to be enrolled in a COAMFTE Marriage and Family Therapy program. The research may disclose reasons Black students are seeking doctorates in MFT, such as problems with retention, and factors associated with successful graduation (Clark et al., 2012; Felder, 2010; McDowell et al., 2002) which are some statements made by the co-researchers. Some questions which may be asked to learn about Black MFT students in MFT programs are as follows:

- What was the purpose of having a MFT doctorate?
- What made you choose to seek a doctorate in MFT?
- What factors are associated with successful graduation?
- What are some contributions for dropping out by Black MFT doctoral students?

Although the present study included Black MFT doctoral degree holders who identified themselves from other ethnic groups, such as Latin, Caribbean, or British, none of the participants came from other racial groups. It would be of interest to examine the responses from various racial backgrounds of MFT students' experiences with White professors. Further research could dissect ethnicities of "White" professors. It would be interesting to read about the differences between the White professors from different ethnic groups. I recalled having a professor from Russia who had only been in United States of America for only 2 years. She taught a multicultural class at her graduate school, but disclosed having minimal exposure to

Black people before coming to USA. During that semester, I remembered feeling isolated with the Russian professor and having no connectedness. In contrast, I was able to recall numerous times of feeling connected with other White professors who were born and raised in USA from both my graduate and doctoral programs. Moreover, it would also be interesting to hear the narratives from the White doctoral professors' viewpoints on teaching Black students and how it may or may not be different from teaching students of other races. Some of the additional questions listed below are related to cultural backgrounds of both professors and students for future research:

- What differences, if any, do White professors need to make in teaching various culture backgrounds of Black students.
- How do MFT doctoral students' previous experiences impact their ability to be connected with their professors?
- How can doctoral MFT students have a closer relationship with White professors?
- What are the experiences of White professors with Black students in MFT doctoral program?
- What do professors need to change when teaching a student of a different cultural group?
- What do students need to know when being taught by a professor of a different culture?

Another recommendation for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal study in which Black MFT students answer the same questions related to their experiences with White professors each semester while enrolled in the COAMFTE program. This way, access to the data may be available to evaluate. In addition to White professors, the questions could be related to

professors of other races. This outlook is linked to COAMFTE goals to increase diversity training in the classrooms. Other questions which can be asked are:

- What are the perceptions of Black MFT doctoral students hold about the qualifications of their White professors?
- On a scale of 1-10, how comfortable are you with your professor?
- What changes occurred with your relationship with your professor?
- What contributed to the changes in your relationship with professors?
- What changes does COAMFTE doctoral MFT programs need to make to accommodate the needs of students?
- What needs to change in COAMFTE doctoral programs to eliminate racial segregation between students and professors?

Another area that might warrant examination is the lived experience of all Black MFT students, whether they are attending a COAMFTE program or not. There are other marriage and family therapy doctoral programs not accredited with COAMFTE for students. Further research can explore the differences, if any, between students enrolled in COAMFTE and non-COAMFTE programs which can yield more detailed results.

More in-depth research on the role of professors, despite race, with regard to the experience of achieving a doctorate in a MFT program needs to be considered. The present study did not elaborate on co-researchers continuation of experiences with the influence of White professors' roles after completing their degrees. J16 stated that she went into a MFT program seeking mentorships from professors, hoping it would last after obtaining her degree. It would be interesting to understand what factors played a role in doctoral degree holders ability to maintain relationships with White professors post-doctoral programs. A more comprehensive exploration

is recommended to understand the experience of relationships between Black students and White professors. Some unanswered questions related to the role of professors include:

- What role do you want professors to play in your educational life?
- What role do you want professors to play in your professional life?
- What role do you want professors to play in your personal life?
- What can doctoral students do to improve their relationships with their professors?
- How can professors facilitate a close relationship with their students?
- What factors determine if students will continue to have a relationship with professors after obtaining a doctoral degree?

Recommendations

In this existential phenomenological study, meanings derived from six Black MFT doctoral degree holders experiences with White professors in COAMFTE programs. The results of this study support research outside the MFT realm which indicates that there is an increase in Black MFT doctoral students enrolled in COAMFTE programs as well as their interactions with White professors are affecting their experiences in the program.

Co-researchers' understandings of the meanings of their experiences provided the opportunity to consider recommendations to the MFT community. The co-researchers mentioned that they were not concerned with the races of their professors when they initially enrolled in COAMFTE MFT programs. However, over the course of attending classes, Black MFT doctoral degree holders spoke of the perceptions of their relationships with White professors.

The co-researchers expressed a couple of ways to improve the COAMFTE program they attended. One of the ways was to get a mentoring program. Based on other responses, the

mentoring program would be helpful to Black MFT students. One reason a mentoring program would be helpful is to enhance the transition into a doctoral program. A mentoring program may assist in understanding various ways the marriage and family therapy doctoral degree can be used apart from academia or a therapeutic setting (Booker, 2007; Miller & Stone, 2011). One co-researcher explained she wanted to use her learned theoretical MFT approaches in a corporate world, such as organizational psychology. Lastly, a mentoring program may be helpful for international MFT students. The international students whose first language may be different from English may profit from receiving assistance in their writing skills. International students who participates in a mentoring program in a COAMFTE program may also seek additional support in understanding the differences between interactions with students and professors in America.

In connection to understanding the interactions between students and professors, it would be beneficial for COAMFTE programs to implement training classes that focuses on teaching students of various backgrounds. Doctoral programs could benefit from having more classes and discussions on the discourse of teaching students of different cultures. Annual requirements for professors to take trainings on teaching students of different cultures will lead to more cultural sensitivity and more conversations about race which in turn could benefit the COAMFTE marriage and family therapy programs.

Another improvement some co-researchers recommended was for COAMFTE programs to have an increased number of Black professors in the MFT programs (Felder, 2010; Miller & Stone, 2011). According to them, they saw White students being groomed to become professors despite their lack of competency. The authors from a previous study focused on Black MFT students in academia reiterated a need for more Black professors. They stated, "Faculty of color not only inspire students who are persons of color to enter academia, but also serve as role

models and mentors for students to make an important contribution to the pool of clinicians and academicians who can meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population” (Miller & Stone, 2011, p. 111). Having Black professors may inspire Black MFT students to consider becoming professors at universities where there are COAFMTE programs.

Some of the co-researchers provided recommendations to Black MFT students. The doctoral degree holders encouraged Black MFTs to do self-exploration. The idea of self-exploration is ongoing and does not stop once a degree is attained. Self-exploration in existentialism is essential to remaining authentic to who you are despite the changes occurring in world (Jun, 2008; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

An additional idea mentioned by a co-researcher was for Black MFT doctoral students to get involved with a program offered at her university called Student Government Association (SGA). She explained the Black MFT students can mentor other students who may be in a graduate school (Clark et al., 2012; Felder, 2010). Moreover, involvement in the SGA may assist in voicing thoughts and feelings related to making changes in the programs.

There are many recommendations for White professors given by the co-researchers. An important recommendation was to require White professor to pay attention to the needs and values of Black MFT students in regards to race which is an essential section under the diversity issues for COAMFTE programs. As the co-researchers spoke on their reflections as MFT students, they expressed difficulty communicating about the topic of race with their White professors. More conversations in the classroom about race may help alleviate these concerns and provide a new kind of support to Black MFT students who are supposed to be trained and be aware of multicultural concerns. Based on the feedback from co-researchers, it is important for

White professors to become more comfortable with communication on the topic of race (McDowell et al., 2002).

Another recommendation made was for professors to adopt and apply the idea of getting to know students where they are. This can be accomplished by professors taking more time to have students identify themselves and their lives in the first two classes each semester. As students identify personal information about themselves, the professors are learning about their students and then can differentiate Black MFT students based on the students' description. Recognizing students individually instead of collectively may help professors better understand students' ability to navigate through the COAMFTE program. There needs to be more open dialogue of our differences as suggested by the co-researchers.

The co-researchers explained they also would have liked for White professors to offer more feedback on their progress (Clark et al., 2012; Felder, 2010; Miller & Stone, 2011). A couple of co-researchers expressed being shocked when they received praise from White professors because it was unexpected. They wanted to hear White professors provide feedback on the strengths they possess. One co-researcher explained she received feedback about her limitation, but the feedback turned to positive because she was also given advice on how to improve.

This research provided the opportunity to learn about different experiences and multiple perspectives. This study is also relevant because it offers an entry into further research in order to enrich the existing literature on Black MFT doctoral students' experiences with White professors. This study can be used as an entrée into a new trend for marketing Black students into COAMFTE programs. Additionally, an effort can be made to hire more Black professors. The suggestion that marketing to Black students and Black professors not only makes sense with

regards to increase the ratio of Black and White enrolled students to professors in the program, but with the perspective of COAMFTE having a diverse program.

Self-Reflections of the researcher

As the primary researcher in this dissertation project, it was rewarding because of my personal transformation. As I listened to each co-researcher's narratives, it confirmed that an existential phenomenological qualitative approach was the best approach. From a multifaceted existentialist lens, I am constantly aware of who I am because of my experiences. The existential approach challenged me to identify the choices I made to become my authentic self through my interactions with the world and others. In this section, my goal is to discuss my movement to my authentic self, based on my understanding of who I am through my experience as a Black doctoral MFT student interacting with White professors.

When planning the onset of the dissertation project, I was extremely nervous with the topic due to the lack of information that I found within the literature. However, with tenacity, I came to realize my personal experience with the topic would enrich the research, as well as my own process of becoming an authentic being. In retrospect, the phenomenon of being a Black MFT having interactions with mostly White professors, I was able to relate to the co-researchers' statements discussed throughout this research. There were many times, I remembered feeling excited because I had similar experiences. It was necessary for me to be self-transparent about presuppositions prior to the interviews so as not to influence the research (Creswell, 2007; Kostere and Percy, 2006; Lyons et al., 2011). During the interview process, I repeatedly informed myself that I was a journalist who needed to hear the co-researchers' stories in order to prohibit biases. Despite initially thinking I was emotionally detached from the issue, I soon discovered that my own perceptions of the COAMFTE program about White professors and

contributed to the overall experience of the research process. I noticed I had parallel viewpoints with the co-researchers which influenced changes in my own perceptions on interacting with White professors. .

In my self-reflection of the perception of the COAMFTE program, my views are similar to many of the co-researchers. In conjunction with all of them, my freedom in choosing a program was based on what the program had to offer. However, during the interview process, I recall being amazed by meeting the only full-time Black professor at that time. Her presence amazed me because it would be the first time I could possibly have a Black professor. Miller and Stone (2010) stated, “Faculty of color not only inspire students who are persons of color to enter academia, but also serve as role models and mentors for students to make an important contribution to the pool of clinicians and academicians who can meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population” (p. 112). Seeing the Black professor made me believe I could achieve my goal of working at a college. I became certain my future goal of being a professor could be more of a reality than before.

When thinking about responsibility, I believe that the particular COAMFTE program at my current university needs to enhance their diversity training and incorporate it more in curriculum. The multiple assignments completed for classes are more on self-reflection of historical figures theories on the issues pertinent to MFT. It would be interesting to do more assignments in which you had to emerge yourself in a different culture then describe any changes it caused in your own life. In the same way I recall doing an assignment in which I needed to reach out to someone with a different sexual orientation than mine, I should be doing an assignment on someone with a different racial culture than my own. As the Black MFT co-researchers discussed their facticity about the MFT program, they provided minimal information

on other races besides White. I would join them in discussing the facts related to Black MFT students in COAMFTE programs. In retrospect, I wanted to know about the collectively student body who are part of my program in order to obtain information on their experiences with the program and their views on their experiences with White professors.

Similar to the co-researchers, I experienced both isolation and connectedness in my interactions with White professors. I could relate to co-researchers J14 and J15 on feeling isolated because of having poor writing skills. Also, I recalled feeling disappointment after J11's expressed her perception of isolation after a White professor avoided her and her colleagues because I had a similar incident with a White professor.

It was interesting for me to be privy to each co-researchers' experience with connectedness with their White professors. As for me, I felt connected to my first practicum professor who was personable, relatable, and funny. He often spoke about his experiences as a MFT doctoral student which was more than 15 years earlier. However, his ability to recall the similar pressures he felt in learning new skills made it easier to receive constructive feedback from him. I felt even more connected with a part-time Black professor. The connectedness could be a result of having similar interests in faith and family. It is that same Black professor whom I call a mentor, a family member, and a friend (Clark et al., 2012; Felder, 2010; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Herlein & Lambert-Shute, 2007; Inman et al., 2004; Miller & Stone, 2011; Zirkler, 2002).

This study provided me the opportunity to consider the impact of the interactions with the co-researchers as it relates to my perception of the authentic self (Jun, 2008; Osborne, 1990; Owen, 1994; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). It is the goal of existentialists to be authentic without society's influence. My experiences with White professors were primarily parallel with co-

researchers in that it had minimal impact on my authenticity as it relates educational goal. I made the statement back in 1998 that I would receive my doctorate. It nearly took 20 years, nevertheless, I am working on achieving my educational goal. My professional goal has not waivered due to my interactions with White professors. Differently, I am aware that my authenticity was impacted personally. I was raised in a very strict religious family. Due to the exposure of having multiple professors with post-modern thinking, I noticed that I was less legalistic in my religious beliefs despite believing in one God who sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die, then was resurrected for the sins of the world, and the Holy Spirit who guides sinners in the sanctification process.

I could not recall experiencing angst in my interactions with White professors. The reason could be that angst is an opportunity to grow in becoming authentic. I would need to choose to give meaning to the angst experience. “Nothing determines me from outside, not because nothing acts upon me, but, on the contrary, because I am from the start outside myself and open to the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 456). Events that we experience are not good or bad, but it is the meaning individuals give to the experience.

The less we give to opportunities to be angst the more likely individuals will achieve their authentic self and be able to act in autonomy. For me, I imposed my ability to make choices in my form of autonomy. I chose to remain autonomous requesting minimal assistance from White professors. Instead, I relied more on the mentorship of my colleagues to complete the doctoral program (Felder, 2010). I would reiterate the advice the co-researchers gave to the Black MFT students and professors. My findings on the meanings the co-researchers provided about their experiences with White professors is an example of the importance each person’s narratives to the field of marriage and family therapy programs.

Conclusion

The idea for the present study came quite naturally, after encouragement from my chair, for me to learn about Black doctoral MFT degree holders' experiences with White professors. As a current student who had mostly White professors in my COAMFTE program, I had the opportunity to get to know other students, and to share the impact White professors made in their lives. With the help of my chair member, I quickly realized that there was much more to be learned from Black MFT doctoral degree holders could discuss about their past experiences with their White professors.

Hearing the co-researchers' responses was a reminder to me that there were similarities and differences in their stories. Because of this, there arose a fervent desire for me to make use of this research opportunity to analyze their responses to the semi-structured questions. After a thorough review, development of themes and sub-themes, and summarizing the data, the usefulness of the study became even clearer providing a voice for the six co-researchers to enhance understanding from educators, students, institutions, mental health professionals, and the community who interacts with Black MFT students.

It is my hope that this study can be the impetus to make changes in the way Black MFT students are viewed in COAMFTE doctoral programs. Based on the responses from the co-researchers, they acknowledged there needs to be more mindfulness of the experiences occurring in COAMFTE programs between Black MFT students and White professors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Guided Questions for the Semi-Structured Interview

1. What do you look for in a professor?
2. How did having a White professor benefit you?
3. How did having a White professor hinder you?
4. What would you say were the most positive experiences you had with Caucasian professor (s)?
5. What would you say were the most negative experiences you had Caucasian professor?
6. How comfortable were you discussing race with your professor?
7. How did having White professor(s) affect your educational plans?
8. How did having White professor (s) affect your professional plans?
9. How did having White professor(s) affect your personal plans?
10. What do White professors need to know about teaching Black students?
11. How does your relationship with Caucasian professors compare with other teachers?
12. What else would you would like to add about your relationship with White professors?
13. What changes, if any, do White professors need to make in teaching Black students?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add about your relationship with your relationship with White professors?

APPENDIX B


Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: APR 22 2015
Continuing Review Date: APR 21 2016

Invitation Letter

Study Title: The Experiences of Black MFT Doctoral Degree Holders with White Professors: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Marriage and Family Therapist:

Congratulations on your recent graduation! What a big accomplishment! My name is Juliana M. Deans and I am conducting a research project as part of my dissertation and Doctorate of Philosophy degree requirements at Nova Southeastern University. This qualitative study will explore Black MFT students' experiences with White professors.

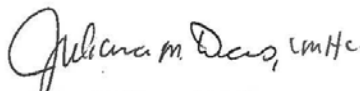
In order to be eligible, participants must be African American/Black descent. Additionally, they must have graduated from a doctoral program between 2009-2014 that was accredited by the AAMFT Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). The face-to-face interview process will last approximately 90 minutes which will also include completing demographics data sheet at a mutually agreed upon venue where confidentiality can be upheld to the highest possible level. Following the interview, Participant will receive their own personal transcripts for the chance to review and edit them. This step in the process should take no more than sixty minutes. Each participant will email their transcript together with any feedback back to me within a week after receiving the transcript. The study will include audio recording of the interview. All data gathered will be kept confidential. There may be

potential risk to your confidentiality if your voice is heard through the door by anyone; therefore, confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be fully guaranteed.


All participation in this research study is strictly voluntary. At any time you may choose to discontinue participating, withdraw from the research and void your consent without prejudice or penalties. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at (561) 543-1748 or djuliana@nova.edu. Also, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Christopher Burnett at (954) 262-3010 or burnett@nova.edu.

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this study. If you have any questions, or would like to take the next step in participating in this research, please email me at djuliana@nova.edu or call me at 561-543-1748. Please keep this letter for your future reference.

Kindly,



Juliana M. Deans, LMHC
2651 South Palm Aire Dr. #102
Pompano Beach, FL 33069
561-543-1748
djuliana@nova.edu


NOVA UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: APR 22 2015
Continuing Review Date: APR 21 2016

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH



NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: APR 22 2015
Continuing Review Date: APR 21 2016

Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study Entitled
The Experiences of Black MFT Doctoral Degree Holders with White Professors: A Phenomenological Study

Funding Source: None.

IRB protocol #

Principle Investigator

Juliana M. Deans, M.S.
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Pompano Beach, FL 33069
(561) 543-1748

Co-investigator

Christopher F. Burnett, Psy.D.
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
(954) 262-3010

For questions/concerns about your research rights, contact:
Human Research Oversight Board (Institutional Review Board or IRB)
Nova Southeastern University
(954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790
IRB@nsu.nova.edu

What is the research about?

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study seeks to learn about Black MFT doctoral degree holders experiences with White professors.

Why are you asking me?

I am inviting you to participate because you are a Black MFT doctoral degree holder who graduated between 2009-2014 from a COAMFTE-accredited doctoral program. There will be approximately 6 participants in this research study.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?

You will participate in a one-time face-to-face audio recorded interview to discuss your experiences with White professors. You will be interviewed by the researcher, Mrs. Deans. This interview will last approximately 80 minutes which will also include completing a brief demographic questionnaire which should take approximately 10 minutes. During the interview Mrs. Deans will ask you questions about your experiences with White professors. You will be also asked to answer questions about your race, ethnicity, age, educational level, and employment in demographic sheet.

3301 College Avenue • Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314-7796
(954) 262-0000 • 800-672-7223, ext. 0000 • Fax: (954) 262-0000 • Web site: www.nova.edu

Initial: _____ Date: _____

All interviews will be done at a mutual location where confidentiality can be upheld. Within two weeks after the interview completed transcriptions will be forwarded to you via secure email that is password encrypted for your review and edit to ensure accuracy of information. This will take you approximately an hour to review. You will have a week to return transcript to researcher via email with your feedback.

Is there any audio or video recording?

This research project will include digital audio recording of the interview. This recording will be heard only by the researcher, Juliana M. Deans, and possibly by the co-investigator, Dr. Christopher Burnett along with the Internal Review Board (IRB). The recording will be kept securely in the researcher's home office in a locked suitcase. The recording will be kept for 36 months from the end of the study. The recording will be destroyed after that time by deleting the recording. Because your face or voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who sees or hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described in this paragraph.

What are the dangers to me?

Risks to you are minimal, meaning they are not thought to be greater than other risks you experience every day. Being recorded means that confidentiality cannot be promised. However, Mrs. Deans has developed procedures to minimize any potential risk to you. Sharing your experiences may cause psychological discomfort. If this happens Mrs. Deans will try to help you. If you need further help, she will suggest someone you can see but you will have to pay for that yourself. Furthermore, participation in this study will take approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes. The study will be conducted at a time and a place of your convenience. If you have questions about the research, your research rights, or if you experience an injury because of the research please contact Mrs. Deans at (561) 543-1748. You may also contact the IRB at the numbers indicated above with questions about your research rights.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

There are no benefits to you for participating.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information private?

The transcripts of the recordings will not have any information that could be linked to you. You, as a participant, will have a predetermined pseudonym that I will use in the analysis. Finally, I will encrypt and password-protect all computer files for all notes and transcripts. When the digital recorder and USB flash drive is not in use, it will be in a locked cabinet in the investigator's private home. As mentioned, the recordings will be destroyed 36 months after the study ends. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The IRB, regulatory agencies, or Dr. Burnett, may review research records.

Initial: _____ Date: _____

What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?

You have the right to leave this study at any time or refuse to participate. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to participate, you will not experience any penalty or loss of services you have a right to receive. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you before the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as part of the research.

Other considerations:

If Mrs. Deans learns anything that might change your mind about being involved, you will be told of this information.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing below, you indicate that:

- This study has been explained to you
- You have read this document or it has been read to you
- Your questions about this research study have been answered
- You have been told that you may ask the researchers any study related questions in the future or contact them in the event of a research-related injury
- You have been told that you may ask Institutional Review Board (IRB) personnel questions about your study rights
- You are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it
- You voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled *The Experiences of Black MFT Doctoral Degree Holders with White Professors: A Phenomenological Study*

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Initials: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E

Demographic Sheet

Please provide a response listed below by checking the appropriate line or filing out on the black line.

Demographic Data Sheet	
	Date _____ Age _____
Name: _____	
Date of Birth: _____	
Race:	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American
Ethnicity:	<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latin <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Two or more ethnicities
Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male
Education:	<input type="checkbox"/> Graduate <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> PsyD
	Number of teachers by Race: <u>Black</u> _____ <u>White</u> _____ <u>Other</u> _____
Degree(s) and year awarded: _____ _____ _____	
Occupation: _____ _____ _____ _____	