The Role Balance Experience of Black Female Counselor Education Doctoral Students Maintaining Full-Time Employment and Significant Relationships

Ariel Encalade Mitchell
asencala@uno.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td

Part of the Counselor Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/1933

This Dissertation is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Dissertation in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Dissertation has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.
The Role Balance Experience of Black Female Counselor Education Doctoral Students
Maintaining Full-Time Employment and Significant Relationships

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Counselor Education

by
Ariel Encalade Mitchell

B.S. University of New Orleans, Psychology, 2006
M.A. Our Lady of Holy Cross College, Marriage and Family Counseling, 2008

December, 2014
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to a few individuals. First, I want to dedicate this study to my parents, Byron Encalade and Connie Encalade, who instilled in me the values and dedication I relied upon to carry me through this journey. All that I am, I owe to you.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my sisters, LuCretia Griffin and Tallace Encalade Madina. I am blessed to have women in my life who led by example and pushed me to be better that I ever thought possible.

I dedicate this dissertation to my best friend, confidant, and husband. I am lucky to have you in my life. I will always be grateful for your unwavering support and confidence in me.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my nieces and nephews; you all bring me so much joy. I pray that I am leading by example and teaching you to aim high and never give up on your dreams.
Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by giving all honor and glory to God for allowing me to walk this journey. Through my faith I know that I was never alone and that my greater purpose would prevail.

To my co-chair and methodologist, Dr. Herlihy: I can’t begin to describe how much I appreciate your presence in my life. Through the phone calls at odd times of the day and the hundreds of e-mails, you have been my rock. Thank you for reassuring me that I would make it through, even when I didn’t quite believe that I would.

To my co-chair, Dr. Watson: thank you for being so cool. In times of high anxiety, you were always there to deescalate the situation and remind me to “enjoy the process.” I appreciate your leadership and value the advice you have given to me over the years.

To Dr. Dufrene: thank you for challenging me to strive toward excellence. You challenged me to embrace the rigor of technical writing, and for that I am eternally grateful.

To Dr. Mason: thank you for starting this journey with me. I greatly appreciate you welcoming me into your life as a student and a co-presenter. Thank you for your confidence and support.

To Dr. Triplett: I cannot explain in words how much you mean to me. You have been on this journey with me as a professor, boss, mentor, friend, and collaborator. I cannot believe my luck that I met someone like you eight years ago. I know that God placed you in my life for many reasons, some of which I have yet to understand. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being my mentor and friend.
To Dr. Miranti: thank you for your mentorship. There are not enough words in the English dictionary to express the gratitude I feel for having you in my life. I sincerely thank you for your support and encouragement.

I would like to thank my friends Dr. Kristen Dickens and Chantrelle Varnado-Johnson for listening to me constantly talk about my research as I organized my thoughts. I am grateful for the friendship that we have built over the years. I love you both dearly. Thank you for being my friends.

I would like to thank my aunt, Lisa Ancar, who has been an integral part of my life since birth. Thank you for being a positive and uplifting example in my life. To my uncle, Michael Thomas, who never forgets to tell me how proud he is of my accomplishments. Thank you for always being there for me. To my uncle-in-law, John Percy Batiste, the first person to welcome me into the Mitchell family. Thank you for your advice and encouragement. To my family that has passed away before I made it to this point, I hope that I am making you proud. To my other family members, including my Grandfather, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins, thank you for loving me and supporting me.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my parents, my siblings, and my husband. My love for you all is endless. Mom and Dad, I owe everything I am and ever will be to you. I am so proud to call you my parents. I feel inspired by your strength and protected by your love. Tallace and LuCretia, it has been a rough road having me as your baby sister. Thank you for always being there for me. D’Juan, I am so lucky to have married my best friend. You are everything that I am not and I love you for that. Thank you for supporting my dreams and loving me through the chaos. We finally made it!
# Table of Contents

Table of Contents ................................................................. v
List of Figures ........................................................................ viii
List of Tables ........................................................................... xi
Abstract .................................................................................... x

Chapter One: Introduction ...................................................... 1
  Background ............................................................................. 1
  Components of the Role Balance Experience ...................... 4
    Black Female Higher Educational Experience ................. 4
    Black Female Work Experience ........................................ 5
    Black Female Significant Relationships ......................... 6

The Role Balance Experience .................................................. 7

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature .................................... 18
  Role of Black Women in U.S. Society .................................. 18
  Black Women and Their Role as Worker ........................... 19
  Black Women and Employment in Education Careers .......... 20
    Wage Equity ........................................................................ 21
    The Dual Earner Phenomenon ......................................... 22
    Work-family Conflict ...................................................... 23
  Black Women and Significant Relationships .................... 24
    Spirituality ......................................................................... 24
    Family ............................................................................. 26
  Black Women in Higher Education ................................... 29
  Interplay Among Work, Family, and Education .................. 32

Summary .................................................................................... 34

Chapter Three: Methodology .................................................. 36
  Purpose and Significance of the Study ................................. 36
  Rationale for Qualitative Design .......................................... 37
    Phenomenological Method .............................................. 39
    Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis ....................... 40
  Research Questions .............................................................. 42
  Researcher Positionality ...................................................... 43
  Participants .......................................................................... 46
  Participant Demographics .................................................... 47
    Giselle .............................................................................. 47
    Christy ............................................................................ 48
    Amanda ............................................................................ 49
Appendix B: Invitation to Participate (Participants) ............................................... 138
Appendix C: Recruitment Letter .............................................................................. 139
Appendix D: Informed Consent ................................................................................. 140
Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter .............................................................................. 141
Appendix F: Statement of Confidentiality ............................................................... 142
Appendix G: Initial and Follow-up Interview Protocol .............................................. 143
Vita ................................................................................................................................. 145
List of Figures

Figure 1 Data Collections and Analysis Process .......................................................... 63
Figure 2 Themes Clustered into Superordinate Themes ................................................. 94
Figure 3 Cross-Case Analysis of Five Participants ....................................................... 96
List of Tables

Table 1 Participant Demographics ................................................................. 50
Table 2 Themes by Participant ......................................................................... 64
Table 3 Cross Case Analysis of Five Participants: List of 11 Themes .............. 92
Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological research study explored the role balance experience of five Black female counselor education doctoral students who were balancing education, full-time employment, and significant relationships. Purposeful and snowball sampling were used to elicit participants who met these criteria: enrolled as a full-time doctoral student, employed full-time (30 or more hours weekly), and involved in a self-defined significant relationship.

The participants in this study individually provided insight into their respective perceived role balance experiences of balancing education, work, and significant relationships. The primary research question for the study was: “What is the role balance experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships?” A review of the literature examining the roles of Black women in U.S. society, Black women and significant relationships, and Black women in higher education provided the foundation for the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person and via Face time to collect data. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by a third party provider. The transcription and initial analysis was sent to each respective participant for member checking and a follow-up interview was scheduled to address any participant concerns or questions. The data were open coded and then clustered into themes. A cross-case analysis was completed and themes were merged into superordinate themes. Superordinate themes were used to answer the primary research question.

Three superordinate themes emerged: past influences present, struggle to have it all, and how to balance. Implications for counselor education programs and students are presented along with recommendations for future research. Personal reflections of the researcher were provided.
Keywords: Role balance, Black female doctoral students
Chapter One

Introduction

In Chapter One, an overview of this study is presented. In the first section, an introduction is presented to three individual phenomena that collectively make up the role balance experience of educational attainment for the majority of Black women: education, work, and significant relationships. The significance and rationale for investigating the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students are explained and relevant current literature is summarized. The conceptual framework, methodology, and research questions are introduced. Finally, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study are discussed and the definitions of terms are provided.

Background

Female roles in society have expanded since colonial times. Women’s roles in early U.S. society were limited primarily to those of wife and mother, whereas the roles of contemporary women have expanded to include worker, student, and other relational roles that often compete for attention. The worker role, in particular, has changed dramatically. Social attitudes based in economic realities have led to changes in career opportunities for women. In 2010, women comprised 47% of the total workforce; among married-couple families with children under the age of 18, two thirds of the workforce was comprised of mothers who were employed, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Solis & Hall, 2011). While there has been an increase in employment for women since colonial times to the present day, the historical statistics lack differentiation based on race; therefore, it cannot be distinguished whether the increase of working women in the U.S. was more prevalent in minority or majority cultures. Existing literature has focused primarily on work-family balance as it relates to White women who have
careers as well as a spouse and perhaps children, and much of this literature has failed to include Black women (i.e. Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987; Becker & Moen, 1999; Bielby & Bielby, 1989; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hill, 2005; Sandow, Bessenrodt-Weberpals, Kausch, & McKenna, 2002; Wentling, 1998).

In 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics), the White female employment rate was 55.6%, while the Black female employment rate was 55.1%, indicating that in recent times both Black and White women are equally invested in employment. While the difference in employment between White and Black women was only .5% in 2010, the opportunities, earned wages, and reported experience of these two groups vary considerably. Although the literature has addressed some of the issues associated with women in the workforce, several dimensions of this phenomenon have been ignored or have been validated only from the perspective of White females. Some researchers have assumed that, based on labor market statistics and the cultural pressures of Black women to maintain matriarchal status within the family structure, a special challenge is created for Black women in attempting to balance the demands of multiple roles (Allen, 1995; Burgess, 1994). Although the work-family balance phenomenon has been investigated (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987; Becker & Moen, 1999; Bielby & Bielby, 1989; Hill, 2005; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Sandow, Bessenrodt-Weberpals, Kausch, & McKenna, 2002; Wentling, 1998), a need still exist to understand the experience of Black women managing multiple competing roles within the context of modern day societal and cultural expectations.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Freeman, 2004), in 2002 approximately 75% of U.S. college students were considered nontraditional. The nontraditional student is older (age 25 and up) than the traditional student, entered college with something other
than a traditional high school diploma, is working full-time, or is married and/or has children (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Although the nontraditional student phenomenon begins in undergraduate studies, it continues through the ranks of graduate and post-graduate studies, to include doctoral studies. Researchers have followed this phenomenon by examining the scholastic experience of nontraditional female students. Williams (1997) explored the dissertation experience of female doctoral students by polling women at various stages of the dissertation process and suggested implications for counselor educators. Williams (1997) noted that women over the age of 35 are the fastest growing group of doctoral students across all fields and there has been a concomitant change in women’s roles. Historically, doctoral students closely resembled traditional students in that they operated primarily as students, with other roles taking secondary places (Williams, 1997). Given that 50% of graduate students today are over the age of 35, 65% are married, and 80% are employed full-time; other roles such as employee, supervisor, partner, mother, daughter, and sister may compete for primary attention.

Researchers have discussed the change in women’s roles as they pursued post-graduate education but most have failed to focus exclusively on the Black female experience. The statistics cited earlier (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004) indicate that a substantial number of women (Black women included) may be attending educational institutions while maintaining employment as well as managing other roles and responsibilities; thus, a need exists to learn about their experience. More pertinent to this study, due to the lack of information available regarding Black females, a need exist to explore the role balance experience of Black women who are engaged in doctoral study while maintaining employment and significant relationships.
Components of the Role Balance Experience

Black Female Higher Educational Experience

The experience of Black females in higher education is important to this study because it relates to the overall role balancing that these women must accomplish. Perkins (1983) believed that, to understand the education of Black women, their social and historical circumstances must be considered. Hamilton (1995) noted that, until recent years, Black women were virtually excluded from participation in the pursuit of higher education. As a result of the lack of presence of Black women in higher education, research was lacking regarding this population. It was not until DeNeal’s (2008) qualitative study that the phenomenon of doctoral persistence of African American women was explored.

Earlier studies provided various foci to understand the differences in the educational experiences of Black females. Johnson (1998) studied the effects of socialization on Black women’s decisions to pursue doctoral degrees. He discussed the historical socialization of Black women as the role of nurturer of family and community. Johnson (1998) suggested that women, thus socialized, might develop a sense of guilt when withdrawing from a nurturer role long enough to meet the demands of doctoral studies. Gordon (1999) studied the barriers that Black women overcome in achieving doctoral degrees. He identified barriers in four areas; perceptions and historical education, gender and race issues, mentoring, and economic and financial barriers. Clark (1999) investigated why Black women were under-represented in doctoral programs and attributed the dearth of Black women in these programs to the dominance of predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Clark (1999) posited that PWIs created alienating environments for Black students as evidenced by, for example, the lack of interaction between Black students and the White students, faculty, and staff. Considering such research, one might conclude that Black
women pursuing higher education face obstacles that may not be encountered by members of majority cultures.

**Black Female Work Experience**

Long and Porter (1984, as cited by Baruch, Biener, and Barnett, 1987) discussed the female work experience from a Eurocentric perspective observed about women and work that, “for women the role of paid worker has been seen as an added-on role (for married women) or as a substitute role (for non-married women)” (p.130). Regardless of the perspective taken, some struggles are the same; lack of adequate maternal leave, job guarantees, and health care have been issues that all women face while dealing with work family balance (Burgess, 1994). On the other hand, there are benefits when women work outside the home, including having social support outside of the home, experiencing personal success, and gaining increased income in a dual earner household (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Hamilton (1995) stated that Black women have always worked outside the home to meet the needs of their families and this reality has not changed since the times of slavery, but that work experience has not been considered from the perspective of Black women. Mays, Coleman, and Jackson (1996), while conducting a national sample of Black women to understand perceived race-based discrimination, employment status, and job stress experiences, also noticed the lack of systematic exploration of the problems experienced by Black women. Thomas and Alderfer (1989) offered an opinion that differed from that of Mays, Coleman, and Jackson (1996), stating that economists, sociologists, and psychologists have explored the Black female work experience but little research has been conducted by a behavioral science discipline that would directly focus on the individual’s experience in the workplace. It does not appear that
either opinion can be confirmed due to the inadequate amount of published literature on the topic.

Assumptions have been made that are based on race, ethnicity, and perceived discrimination in the workplace, Blacks experience role strain and conflict not relevant to members of the majority culture (Mays, Coleman, & Jackson, 1996). In addition, health concerns (i.e., blood pressure and self-reports of health problems) were observed as correlates to work stress for minority employees (James, Lovato, & Khoo, 1994). Some researchers have chronicled the experiences of minorities in predominantly White companies and professions, and have focused on presenting difficulties and coping skills to the reader (e.g., Thomas & Alderfer, 1989). The lack of information supports a need for further inquiry into the Black female work experience.

**Black Female Significant Relationships**

Significant relationships maintained by Black women while pursuing the doctoral degree include a range of roles. Examples of significant relationships for Black women may include roles such as partner, daughter, sister, parent, friend, or the relationship with a higher power. Relationships come in various forms (i.e., familial, spiritual, mentoring, and peer) and have varying significance to women engaged in doctoral studies (Patterson, 2006; Rogers, 2006). Based on this broad understanding, it is possible for a Black woman to perceive a relationship to be significant regardless of physical intimacy. Current literature focuses on female relationships within a familial context. As such, it is imperative to note that Black women’s place within the family must also be considered through social and historical lenses (Perkins, 1983).

Black women historically have taken on the role of caretaker, whereas the role of laborer was thrust upon them due to enslavement (Burgess, 1994; Hamilton, 1995; Jones, 1982;
Matthews & Rodin, 1989). As a result, both roles (i.e., caretaker and laborer) have remained as expectations for Black women, regardless of additional responsibilities. The expectation to undertake multiple roles has been conceptualized as an unconscious Afro-centric state of being that is embedded in the psyche of Black women (Lee, 1997). It was hoped that insights gained from this research study would provide another lens through which the role balance experience of Black women can be understood.

The Role Balance Experience

The phenomenon of role balancing is present in the lives of Black women to a greater extent today than it was present historically. Before the civil rights movement, the involvement of Black women in the labor market generally was not based on a desire to achieve personal goals; rather, it was simply a means to support the family (Burgess, 1994; Butler, 1994). The family caretaker was the primary role for Black women within their own families and in jobs such as domestic workers, maids, and nannies between the end of slavery and the civil rights movement (Butler, 1994). The confluence of the feminist and civil rights movements of the 1960s created new opportunities as well as new challenges for Black women. Over time, three distinctive roles emerged in the lives of Black women; worker, caretaker, and student.

The role balance that occurs within the student role has been explored by several researchers (e.g., Bailey-Iddrisu, 2010; DeNeal, 2008; Patterson, 2006; Rogers, 2006; Starkes, 2010) who have focused on maintaining personal relationships while embarking on the academic quest for the doctoral degree. For example, through qualitative inquiry Patterson (2006) found that it was a struggle for Black women to balance intimate relationships and doctoral studies. Participants revealed that the doctoral process was a hindrance to personal relationships and relationships were a hindrance to the doctoral process (Patterson, 2006). Patterson (2006) first
encountered this role balance struggle indirectly through her relationships with women who were single, divorced, childless, or enmeshed in troublesome or unfulfilling relationships when they completed their doctoral studies. Thus, one main question guided Patterson’s (2006) research study was: “How do Black female doctoral students manage to maintain intimate relationships during doctoral study?” However, Patterson (2006) did not consider that doctoral studies and intimate relationships do not comprise the full experience of most Black female doctoral students. In addition to the role of student and participant in an intimate relationship, many Black women also may be balancing employment. Thus, a third role may also directly impact or be impacted by balancing relationships and educational responsibilities. My research study, while keeping in mind race and gender along with the need to understand the Black female doctoral experience, sought to understand the Black female doctoral experience within the interplay of relational, employment, and student roles that encompass the lives of many Black women today.

Other researchers have compartmentalized as individual entities the roles of Black women pursuing doctoral degrees. Some have discussed the effects of a specific role (such as work or family) on educational attainment (Patterson, 2006; Rogers, 2006), but no studies have acknowledged the impact of each role (work, family, and education) on the others or the experience of Black women pursuing doctoral degrees while all three roles are present. Based on a review of the literature, it appears that a need remains to understand the Black female doctoral experience from the perspective of “juggling” the multiple roles that are undertaken while attempting to obtain the degree. I hoped to address this need by investigating specifically how those multiple roles or external influences impact the doctoral experience and how the doctoral
experience impacts the external influences that include employment, and significant relationships as defined by the participant.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that was used to understand the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships is general systems theory. Systems theory postulates that an experience, negative or positive, had by one member of a system or family will influence the entire system, as no one member operates singularly (Walsh, 2003). In examining the management of multiple roles, it is important to consider that “normal” functioning of each system is subjective and is typically conceptualized by systemic therapists as the absence of symptoms (Walsh, 2003). Goode (1960 as cited in Marks & MacDermid, 1996) noted that overly demanding systems typically yield some sort of strain (a symptom) that may create dysfunction. The experiences of participants in this study were conceptualized through a systems perspective to provide links among the various roles. Those links reflected the multidirectional flow of each role and how each role impacts the others.

Since the 1960s, several researchers have focused on stress and its perceived negative effects on women who are balancing work and family (Barnett, 2004; Gregory & Milner, 2009; McLellan & Uys, 2009). According to Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, and Tilleman (2011), early research on role stress and work balance and family tended to focus on the negative side of work-family interaction; however, recently researchers have begun to discuss the positive aspects. Researchers also have tended to view each role as a separate entity, thereby assuming that strain is “normal” rather than acknowledging the interconnectedness of each role within a larger organized system (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). For this reason, a general family systems
approach to work-life balance was used to explore the interplay of roles within a system while recognizing strain on any or all roles as one possible outcome of the balancing experience.

No studies were found that explored from a systems perspective the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students who are maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships; however, research has been conducted that has focused on each individual role and the experience that occurred (e.g., Brown & Watson, 2010; DeNeal, 2008; Gordon, 1999; Patterson, 2006; Rogers 2006; Starkes, 2010; Williams, 1997). As women move fluidly through the roles, they take with them the embedded ideals that are passed down from older generations or are taken from society. Thus, exploring those ideals establishes a comprehensive context in which the Black woman’s role balance experience may be viewed. Therefore, to fully understand the role balance experience of Black women in this study, family systems theory is supplemented by three contexts; education, work, and family. Black female doctoral students currently enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs who are also engaged in full-time employment and a significant relationship were the participants in this study to increase understanding of the role balance experience.

Significance of the Study

The lack of diversity in academic settings has been described as an issue of major concern (Kurtz-Costes, Helmke, & Ulku-Steiner, 2006; Ulku-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes, & Kinlaw, 2000). The lack of diversity is also a societal issue, as higher education is related to positive societal outcomes and has become a gauge to define success in life (Starkes, 2010). Although the enrollment of women in higher education has increased on all levels and even outweighs that of men on the bachelor’s and master’s degree levels, women still are underrepresented at the doctoral level (Kurtz-Costes, et al., 2006) and Black women are even more seriously
underrepresented. According to Ellis (2001), Black women comprise a small percentage of doctoral students. The National Center for Education statistics (Aud, Hussar, Planty, Snyder, Bianco, Fox, Frohlich, Kemp, & Drake, 2010) reported that of the 81,953 doctoral degrees conferred on women, 65.6% were obtained by White females and 8.3% were conferred on Black females. Researchers (Bailey-Iddrisu, 2010; Rogers, 2006) have addressed the general experience of Black female doctoral students but have not emphasized the experience of balancing multiple life roles, including work and relationships, while working toward a doctorate. For example, Patterson (2006) acknowledged the process of managing intimate personal relationships as significant to the persistence of Black women in achieving academic excellence, but did not consider the relationship as an additional task or role that must be balanced. The lack of attention to the role balance experience is one impetus for this study. In this study, I gathered narrative accounts of the role balance experience to increase understanding of how Black female counselor education doctoral students manage multiple roles within the relational and societal contexts in which they live. It was hoped that this information would provide insight into an underrepresented population and potentially help to increase enrollment and retention of Black female doctoral students through a greater awareness of their specific experiences and struggles.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to increase awareness of the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students who are maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships. Although the literature on multiple roles and their effects on the family seem abundant, the focus has been primarily on life as a married, employed parent (Anderson & Spruill, 1993; Bieblv & Bielby, 1989; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Glezer & Wolcott, 1999;
Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hill, 2005; Kelleher, 2007; Martin & Sanders, 2003; McLellan & Uys, 2009; Sandow, et al., 2002). The concept of role balance needs to be expanded beyond family and work to include the role of doctoral student.

I hoped that exploration of this topic would enhance and deepen understanding of the experiences of Black women who manage the roles associated with worker, student, and significant relationships. Overall, 25 to 40% of doctorates remain uncompleted (Hanson, 1992). Ultimately, the understanding gained through this study will help Black women move beyond all but dissertation (ABD) status and completing their doctoral studies.

**Overview of Methodology**

In this study, I utilized a qualitative, phenomenological methodology with interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) for data analysis. The qualitative approach is a good fit for this study due to the subjective experience being studied as well as the lack of research on this particular topic. According to Williams and Paterson (2009), the phenomenological researcher seeks subjective in-depth understanding and interpretation of experience. To gain a true understanding of one person’s reality, only personal conscience of the immediate experience is considered (Groenewald, 2004). As I acknowledge that every person perceives or experiences phenomena in a multitude of ways, I hoped that similarities would appear in the individual experiences of women and that these similarities would help to increase understanding of the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students. Therefore, I looked with the participant as a phenomenologist participant observer (Bygstad & Munkvold, 2007) while using the six-step process of IPA to increase rigor of this study; reading and re-reading, conducting initial noting, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, moving to the next case, and looking for patterns across cases (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).
A small, purposive sample of five participants was selected to gain insight into the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students who are maintaining fulltime employment and significant relationships. Data were gathered through an initial semi-structured interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes and a follow up interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. Prior to the initial interview, a demographic questionnaire was completed by each participant to validate the participant’s appropriateness to participate in this study; information on identifying race, age, sex, relational status, employment status, and educational status was gathered. An interview guide was used to assist me in conducting the interviews in a meaningful manner and ensuring that questions relevant to the study were being asked. Interviews were completed in person at a mutually agreed-upon time and place based on interviewee availability. In addition, each interview was audiotape-recorded based on the participant’s preference. Follow-up interviews were utilized to member check, allowing the participants to add or delete information as well as to verify my analysis and interpretations of emerging themes. Participants in this study were solicited through three processes; university list serves, personal recruitment, and snowballing.

While recruiting participants who were experiencing the phenomenon of balancing doctoral studies, full-time employment, and significant relationships; I remained aware of my personal involvement with this phenomenon, which validated my role as participant observer. As a participant observer, I acknowledged that my personal experience led me to this topic as a research interest. As a doctoral candidate, full-time employee, and wife I recognized that I am intertwined in the role balance phenomenon being studied. Based on my personal experience and attachment to the research question, it was imperative that in my role as a researcher I set aside my personal views and allow the participants to paint the picture of their experience, and that I analyze the data through an unbiased lens. I analyzed data through an unbiased lens by taking
three measures: using the six-step process of IPA, ensuring transparency of researcher biases, and taking steps to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is obtained through credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). These steps are fully described in Chapter Three.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study was: What is the role balancing experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students who are maintaining significant relationships and full-time employment? To assist in answering this question, three sub-questions were identified: (a) What do participants consider to be significant relationships in their lives? (b) What roles do the participants feel are most pertinent to their role balance experience? (c) How do the roles influence one another?

Assumptions of the Study

An assumption of this researcher was that concurrently engaging in roles such as employee and partner in a significant relationship would influence the Black female doctoral experience. Another assumption was that this experience is encapsulated in the historical view of Black females; thus, their experience is defined by the conditions of their culture. Finally, I assumed that participants would provide information honestly and that this information would assist in a holistic understanding of the Black female educational experience.

Limitations and Delimitations

A potential limitation of this study is that the Black female doctoral students who participated in this study may be different from those who chose not to participate, which would limit generalizability of the results of the study. In addition, participants were recruited from CACREP-accredited programs; thus, the results are not generalizable to non-CACREP-
accredited programs. Although generalizing the data to a broad population is not the goal in qualitative research or interpretative phenomenological analysis, generalizability can be a concern for researchers. Thus, it should be acknowledged as a potential limitation. Another limitation is that participants were asked to discuss the role balance experience as it relates to school, work, and significant relationships; yet, their experience also could be influenced by additional roles or external factors that were not controlled for in this research study.

The study was delimited to Black female counselor education doctoral students in CACREP-accredited programs who are maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships. Also, participants were initially recruited from Southern states within 400 miles of Baton Rouge, Louisiana but the search for participants was then expanded to a national search of all programs listed on the CACREP website.

**Definition of Terms**

**Role Conflict:** The potential imbalance in multiple roles (McLellan & Uys, 2009); simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

**Role Expansion:** Adding more responsibilities to one role without reducing the obligations of another (Grönlund & Öun, 2010).

**Role Overload:** An occurrence of having too much to do without the resources to attend to all demands (Roehling, Jarvis, & Swope, 2005).

**Role Spillover:** The strain of one role interfering or conflicting with another (Roehling, et al., 2005).

**Role Strain:** Difficulty in meeting given role demands.
**Traditional Role:** The ideology of separate gender roles in which women are primarily responsible for the home, child rearing, and maintenance of good relationships and men are primarily responsible for the financial support of the family (Van de Vijver, 2007).

**Work Family Conflict:** Simultaneous pressures from the work and family domains that are mutually incompatible in some respect, such that meeting the demands of one role makes it difficult to meet the demands of the other role (Greenhaus & Singh, 2003); mutually incompatible pressures from two domains (Gregory & Milner, 2009).

**Work Family Balance:** The extent to which individuals are equally involved in and equally satisfied with their work role and their family role (Greenhaus & Singh, 2003).

**Work Life Balance:** involves a broader understanding of the work family balance definition (Gregory & Milner, 2009).

**Chapter Summary**

Although there is an abundance of literature surrounding the balance of work and family, research related to Black women balancing work and significant relationships while managing the additional responsibility of higher education at the doctoral level is sparse. It was hoped that exploration of the individual experience of the participants in this study would add to the body of literature and hopefully provide key information on the experience of Black women who are pursuing higher education while managing work-life balance. Information gained in this research will assist Black women in their decision-making while illuminating and encouraging the process of educational attainment. In addition, if more Black women complete their doctoral studies, Black women may be more prepared to take on careers that were once unavailable to them, such as careers in the professoriate. This study may assist universities in understanding
the particular struggle Black women face, allowing university leaders to develop programs that may increase minority enrollment and graduation rates.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

In this chapter, a review is presented of the literature relevant to the role balance experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students who are maintaining employment and significant relationships. In the first section, an overview is offered of the historical roles of Black women in the United States, as embedded within the general socio-historical context of women’s roles as defined by the dominant culture. This will form a context for the examination of the work, significant relationships, and education roles of the Black female. In the second section, the work experiences of Black women are explored, including a discussion of the dual-earner phenomenon as a result of the increase of Black women in the workforce. In the third section, higher educational access for Black women specifically is discussed. Fourth, the importance of significant relationships within the Black community is presented along with the literature focused on family and spirituality, as spirituality has been found to be an important element in the experiencing of this population. Fifth, the interplay among work, family, and education is explored, as there is a lack of literature regarding this triad of roles for Black women. Finally, a summary of the relevant literature is presented.

Role of Black Women in U.S. Society

It has been suggested (Kaufman, 2000; Van de Vijver, 2007; Yogev, 1981) that in the United States, two paradigms, traditional and egalitarian, have described women’s roles within the home and in society. Traditional roles for women typically were situated within the domain of wife, daughter, and mother. In the traditional paradigm, males held majority power in relationships and operated as the head of household, and typically the man’s education, occupational status, and earnings exceeded those of his wife (Axelson, 1963; Blood, 1963; Nye,
The expectation for women was that they would be selfless nurturers, exercising moral influence and social order through child rearing. By contrast, the egalitarian paradigm emphasizes personal happiness within a system by sharing tasks within the household as well as within society (Van de Vijver, 2007). The egalitarian belief supports shared labor, dual careers, and education for both men and women.

The traditional and egalitarian lifestyles have always co-existed in the lives of Black women. For example, during the times of slavery Black women labored in fields beside men by day and assumed the duties of primary caretaker by night (Burgess, 1994). Black women as laborers were considered to be the equals of men by day, but they also assumed the traditional role of caretaker at home. Black women’s roles as worker and primary caretaker remained constant through the demise of slavery as well as the women’s suffrage movement, because suffrage was primarily a movement for the rights and equal treatment of White women. Change began to occur following the feminist and civil rights movements of the 1960s, as is further explained in the following sections. A major change in Black women’s roles can be seen in their evolving work role that began in the U.S. as slaves and now includes highly trained careers.

**Black Women and Their Role as Worker**

Black women have always worked outside the home, whether it was by demand (slavery) or by necessity to help meet their family needs. Because Black women have had a long history, since slavery, of working outside the home, cultural pressures and expectations for Black women to both work and care for their families are deeply embedded in the collective psyche (Hamilton, 1995). Thus, an understanding of Black women in the workforce must be situated within a historical context.

Prior to World War II, Black women worked for wages to help support their families,
whereas White women’s work was done primarily within the home or on family-owned farmland (Burgess, 1994; Matthews & Rodin, 1989). Although Black women worked outside the home, a limited range of jobs was available to them. Many Black women maintained employment as service providers, one of the few career opportunities open to minority female workers. Before World War II, more than 50% of Black women were domestic servants and during the war that percentage grew to 60% (Davis, 1981). In post-war years, Black women generally were still confined to domestic occupations while other opportunities were becoming available to White women (Davis, 1981).

**Black Women and Employment in Education Careers**

The feminist movement of the 1960s opened career opportunities for White women, but it was the civil rights movement that opened doors for Black women to explore career opportunities in fields such as education, as math and science careers for Black women remained comparatively rare (Matthews & Rodin, 1989). The trend of education as a primary career for Black women has continued into more recent times. The 2010 annual occupation averages showed 36.4% of the female population worked in education and health services and 22.5% worked in the health care and social assistance industry; similar statistics applied to Black women, of whom 43.2% held positions in education and health services and 22.5% worked in the health care and social assistance industry (Solis & Hall, 2011). Black women have secured careers in education mainly as teachers in primary and secondary educational institutions. Less than 2% of Black women are employed at the highest level in higher education, full professor (Trower & Chait, 2002).

Thus, although Black women are entering the workforce in educational fields at high rates, the number of Black women at the top positions in academe remains disproportionately small.
Gregory, 2001). Black women usually are employed at the adjunct level, rather than in tenure track positions that have a greater retention rate. As such, Black women are in constant rotation as instructors at the university level (Gregory, 2001). One implication of the instability of Black women in tenure track academic positions is that Black female doctoral students have few consistent role models who can mentor them through the tenure process within the Black cultural context to procure permanent employment.

**Wage Equity**

Wage equity is also a source of contention for Black women in the labor market, as Black women do not receive equal wages for identical work. For example, in 1979, White women earned, on average, $298, while Black women earned $227 per week; by 2010, White women’s weekly earnings had increased to $850 while Black women earned $633 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). These statistics reveal that Black women contend with the additional issue of less compensation than their White counterparts do. These data suggest that if Black women are employed and aware of the wage differential, their working experiences will be different from those of their White counterparts; yet, Black women are seldom included in the research on women in the workforce. Because there is little information on the experience of Black women in the labor market, a monolithic characterization of this population has developed that has failed to consider the values and beliefs inherent in Black culture (Allen, 1995; Lee, 1997). The experiences of White women have been generalized to Black women, apparently based on the assumption that assimilation and acculturation have erased differences between the two groups (Cokley & Helm, 2007).
The Dual Earner Phenomenon

A considerable amount of literature under the rubric of work-family balance has focused on the experience of White women who are balancing work in a non-traditional dynamic and who are attempting to maintain equilibrium between work and home responsibilities (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; McLellan & Uys, 2009; Rantanen et al., 1992). Additionally, the increase of women in the workforce, from 44% to 55% from 1967 to 2009, created a dual earner dynamic for partnered women that have been explored only from the perspective of White females in traditional dual-earner relationships (Census Population Survey, 2011). The information on dual earner families provides a context for the struggles that are faced while attempting to balance two full-time careers in one household. The research on dual earner households is reviewed in this sub-section as one possible experience of the participants who may define significant relationship within the context of an intimate relationship.

Dual-earner families may be categorized as dual-job or dual-career (Anderson & Spruill, 2003). Families in which both husband and wife are wage earners, primarily for obtaining money and some personal satisfaction, are referred to as dual-job families, whereas dual-career families have been described as existing when both heads of the household are pursuing careers in work that require a high degree of commitment, special training, and increasing degrees of responsibility (Anderson & Spruill, 1993). Anderson and Spruill (2003) noted that integrating the demands of two full-time careers with family responsibilities presents challenges to the dual-earner family and thereby creates stress and conflict; although the problems faced by the dual earner family typically have been framed as a woman’s problem of attempting to balance work and family (Becker & Moen, 1999). Historically, it also has been believed that women feel conflict between the demands of the workplace and of the family more strongly than men.
because the expansion of women’s roles to include employee has been considered the origin of conflict within the family (Barnett, 1998 as cited in Hill, 2005). However, Pearlin (1974, as cited in Baruch, Biener & Barbett, 1987) asserted that it is not outside employment that causes women stress; rather, it is their employment inside the home due to its lack of structure, boundaries, and limit setting. Historically, the home environment has been viewed as a stress-free sanctuary that provides a buffer from the stressors of work, but this was a male-based view (Baruch, Bierner & Barnett, 1987). The home provided a safe haven from the demands of the workforce for men and work provided a similar buffer for women to escape the expectations at home. Thus, experts have argued that women joining the workforce and dual-earner couples will continually increase (Kelleher, 2007). Therefore, it is also assumed that, as more women join the labor market, there is a greater potential for conflict in existing and expanding roles (Becher & Moen, 1999; Bielby & Bielby, 1989), also referred to as work-family conflict.

**Work-family Conflict**

Work-family conflict is described as simultaneous pressures from the work and family domains that are mutually incompatible in some respect, such that meeting the demands of one role makes it difficult to meet the demands of the other role (Greenhaus & Singh, 2003) or, more simply stated, as mutually incompatible pressures from two domains (Gregory & Milner, 2009). Although assumptions have been made regarding where conflict is felt more strongly, at home or at work, it is important to understand that work and family influence is bidirectional; work affects family and family affects work (Hill, 2005). Thus, conflict in any domain will be felt in all others. Work-family balance has been described as equal satisfaction in the work and family roles, obtained by constant negotiation of roles within the household to maintain operation with minimal conflict (Gregory & Milner, 2009; Rantanen et al., 2011); however, it seems reasonable
to assume that work-family balance can be accomplished only in a non-traditional household where household duties are shared.

**Black Women and Significant Relationships**

A considerable amount of literature has alluded to the familial context of significant relationships within the lives of Black females. Significant relationships are encountered in many forms, such as partner, mother, daughter, sister, or friend. Although familial relationships may be primary in the lives of women, there may be additional roles that are extremely important. According to Butler (1994), Black female educational success was attributed to close ties to family, teachers, clergy, colleagues, and other community members. In addition, Rogers (2006) cited the three domains that Black women believed contributed to successful attainment of the doctoral degree as institutional support, social support, and spirituality. Thus, based on Butler’s (1994) and Rogers’ (2006) findings, two common relationships that may be considered significant in the lives of the participants in this study may be family and spirituality. Literature regarding the impact of spirituality in the lives of Black women, Black women’s role in the family, as well as the interplay among family, work, and educational relationships are discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Spirituality**

Black women, especially Black college women, tend to turn to their spiritual beliefs as a coping mechanism to deal with the stressors of existing in a socially and politically oppressive system (Watt, 2003). Watt (2003) emphasized that Black women use spirituality as a psychological resistance strategy to combat negative social messages. Two scholars, Allison and Broadus (2009), reflected on their own struggles though academe as students and as educators, stating that their journey was divinely ordered by making the connection between spiritual
beliefs and their Afrocentric identity. “On our present journey as educators, we have come to recognize and acknowledge the influence an Afrocentric perspective has on our spirituality, identity, and ultimately our mission as teachers (Allison & Broadus, 2009, p. 81). The African proverb, “She who learns must also teach” is the crux of Allison and Braudus’ experience, which helped them persevere as students and educators in predominantly White educational institutions (Allison & Broadus, 2009).

Patton and McClure (2009) posited that spirituality is the most significant factor contributing to the strength of Black women. The purpose of their study was to explore the role of spirituality in the experiences of African American undergraduate women while they were attending college. Six major themes emerged from the study. “The Presence of Something More” (p. 47) was an important theme that focused on the use of spirituality by the 14 participants as a way to find meaning and construct responses to experiences that they did not understand. Responses usually reflected Biblical principles learned earlier in life. For example, participants made statements regarding a “master plan,” stating, “He (referring to God) has a plan for everything” (Patton & McClure, 2009, p. 47). The belief that their experience was out of their hands and that they were being watched and cared for by a higher power enabled them to continue through stressful times in education.

Although spirituality is a major source of strength for Black women through their educational endeavors, it is also important to note that spirituality/religion can hamper the educational experience due to the amount of time spent engaged in religious and/or spiritual practices (i.e. Bible study, church services, participation in congregational committees). Since religion was acknowledged by several researchers (i.e. (Allison & Broadus, 2009; Patton & McClure 2009; Watt, 2003) as an important factor in the life of Black female doctoral students, it
is possible that it may be described as a source of strength as well as a possible source of contention throughout the educational experience of Black female doctoral students.

Family

Black women historically have taken on the role of caretaker. Slave owners redeveloped the roles of Black women to accommodate the needs of slavery; at the same time Black women made the conscious decision to continue the primary caretaker role within the home (Burgess, 1994; Hamilton, 1995; Jones, 1982; Matthews & Rodin, 1989). Caputo (1999) believed that Black women find their strength in caretaking for others. As friends, Black women tend to take on the roles of counselor, confidante, and sounding board while viewing the friendship as a genuine sisterhood (Patterson, 2006). As daughters and siblings, Black women are expected to care for aging or ill parents, providing emotional and economic support, as well as care for younger siblings when parents are unable (Patterson, 2006). The relationships in which Black women engage can be consuming mentally, emotionally, physically, and economically.

Bailey-Iddrisu (2010) and DeNeal (2008) both noted that relationships were an integral part of success but also a source of contention for the women in their research study. Bailey-Iddrisu (2010) conducted a case study of ten African American women who within the past five years had completed the doctorate at universities within the South Florida region. It was noted that all of the participants indicated support systems as a major factor in their completion of doctoral studies (Bailey-Iddrisu, 2010). DeNeal’s (2008) qualitative inquiry of eight African American women was meant to describe the experience of persevering through doctoral studies; however, the study shed light on the mentoring role as a common factor that assisted with doctoral success in her participants’ discussion of relationships. On the other hand, both researchers discussed the perils in those relationships. Bailey-Iddrisus (2010) stated that most
participants had multiple family responsibilities that they had to figure out how to balance with little support from the university they attended. Themes of isolation and invisibility were woven through the women’s experience at their respective universities; participants felt as though the professors were not available nor did they care about their success (Bailey-Iddrisus, 2010). In DeNeal’s (2008) study, the participants were able to rely on their faculty mentors for emotional and academic support, but still felt isolation due to a lack of cultural understanding from faculty and peers. Both studies (DeNeal, 2008; Bailey-Iddrisus, 2010) shared in the research conclusion that the lack of support (emotional and academic) was a common obstruction to the success of Black women in persisting toward doctoral attainment.

In a study by Brown and Watson (2010), the role of mother was noted to have profound implications for studies at the doctoral level. Brown and Watson (2010) set out to understand the experiences of eight female doctoral students who had completed or had almost completed a doctorate. In a reflective view of their experience, the participants focused on the complications that domestic demands created for their studies and stated that they often were torn between the demands of their roles as wife, mother, and student. The term “juggling” was used to describe how the participants attempted to meet the responsibilities of being a mother, wife, and student. Successful balance was achieved by dedicating time to all roles while a feeling of guilt was noticed when choosing any role for an extended period of time; however, it was noted that most times the participants readily slighted their academic role rather than compromise their role within the family. Also, successful balance was attributed to the ability to switch roles when needed to minimize occurrences of role conflict. Brown and Watson (2010) discussed the phenomenon of career women returning to school as non-traditional students with familial responsibilities in tow, yet the findings focused almost exclusively on the role of motherhood,
only briefly alluding to the fact that academic success is predicated upon the ability to balance work and family. Brown and Watson (2010) cautioned universities to become more aware of the dual lives of women researchers and urged others to contribute to the body of literature on women in education.

A review of the literature revealed two studies (Patterson, 2006; Pierce, 2005) that alluded to the impact of balancing multiple roles during doctoral study; however, neither considered roles related to work, relationships, and education at the same time. No additional studies were found that addressed balancing the three competing roles as a distinct experience within the cultural context of being Black and female. Pierce (2005) investigated two roles that seemed to have an impact on the participants’ wellness: student and mother. The experience of wellness for counselor education doctoral students who are mothers was examined through a feminist lens and the assumption of egalitarianism in the participants’ personal relationships was discussed. Pierce (2005) situated her study within the context of her personal struggle as a student, full-time employee, mother, and fiancée, however; the roles of employee and fiancée were not discussed as major influences. The study focused on motherhood and participant wellness. Conclusions focused on five categories: view of motherhood, sacrifices and rewards, program support, wellness, and dissonance in multiple roles. Discord in multiple roles was briefly discussed as it related to the impact on motherhood. For example, stress, guilt, and dichotomous feelings were themes throughout the study as they related to efforts to combine motherhood and educational attainment, but other roles such as partner and employee were not addressed.

Patterson (2006) examined the connection between personal relationships and doctoral studies. The phenomenon of educated women who, by the end of their doctoral studies, were “single, divorced, childless, or enmeshed in unfulfilling and troubled relationships” (p. 1) was
the foundation for this study. Patterson indicated that personal relationships comprise a role just like any other that, once engaged in, can impact other aspects of life. However, Patterson’s (2006) most significant finding was related to how the participants chose to define significant relationships outside of the context presented to them. The researcher initially set out to explore significant relationships defined by intimacy or marriage, but as the women discussed the impact of those relationships on their doctoral experience, other relationships such as friendships and relationships with mentors and colleagues emerged in the discussion (Patterson, 2006). Thus, Patterson’s (2006) findings suggested that, although intimate relationships may be the more common role that impacts the perceived educational experience of Black women, other roles might cause conflict.

**Black Women in Higher Education**

In the early 1900s, women began to have minimal access to colleges, and by the mid 20th century public colleges were predominantly coeducational (Madigan, 2009). However, Black women continued to be denied access to the educational opportunities enjoyed by Whites. For example, although Harvard, the first educational institution in America, opened its doors in 1636 (Harvard University, 2013), it was not until 1862 that the first Black woman, Mary Jane Patterson, earned a bachelor’s degree from a U.S. university (Perkins, 1983). Although laws had been enacted to allow educational access to Black people, at that time most universities still did not offer admission to Black students. Therefore, it was not until the civil rights, feminist, and higher education movements in the 1960s that Black women entered higher education in significant numbers.

According to the 2011 census report, 31.8% of the female population (i.e., including all races and ethnicities) was enrolled in college or graduate school. According to the National
Center for Education Statistics (nces.ed.gov), of the women earning doctoral degrees in 1976, 86.9% were White and 6.3% were Black. Nearly 35 years later, in 2010, 65.6% were White and 8.3% were Black, with Hispanic and Asian women comprising a comparatively greater percentage than in 1976. Of the 118,079 women surveyed regarding their educational attainment, less than 1% (.87%; \(n=1025\)) had earned a doctoral degree and only .06% (\(n=65\)) identified as Black women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Researchers have begun to focus their attention on understanding the educational experience of women who have pursued doctoral-level higher education; however, a limited body of literature exists on the doctoral experiences of Black women specifically. For example, Williams (1997) examined the dissertation experience of all female doctoral students in counselor education, and found that having supportive mentors and peers aided in completing the dissertation process. Williams (1997) did not focus on any particular race and/or culture, but the findings of her study indicated that female doctoral students have multiple relationships that may impact their scholastic experience. Although relationships in the form of mentors and peers were identified as integral components of the dissertation process, it was also acknowledged by Williams (1997) that significant relationships were the least discussed but needed further attention.

The most recently published research that considers the doctoral experience exclusively from the Black female perspective began in 1994 with Butler’s research. Butler (1994) investigated the enabling and restricting factors of African American women’s advanced educational attainment. Butler (1994) found that spirituality, views of education, and familial and communal influences were the enhancing factors and that internal colonialism situated within racism was the inhibiting factor. Johnson (1998) studied the effects of socialization on
Black women’s decisions to pursue doctoral degrees. He discussed the historical socialization of Black women into the role of nurturer of family and community, and suggested that Black women thus socialized might develop a sense of guilt when withdrawing from this nurturer role long enough to meet the demands of doctoral studies. Gordon (1999) studied the barriers that Black women overcome in achieving doctoral degrees and identified barriers in four areas: perceptions and historical education, gender and race issues, mentoring, and economic and financial barriers. Clark (1999) investigated why Black women were under-represented in doctoral programs; he attributed the dearth of Black women in these programs to the dominance of PWIs, predominantly White institutions. Clark (1999) posited that PWIs created alienating environments for Black students as evidenced by, for example, the lack of interaction between Black students and the White students, faculty, and staff (Clark, 1999). Considering such research evidence, one might conclude that Black women pursing higher education face obstacles that may not be encountered by members of the majority cultures.

Rogers (2006) studied the factors leading to successful attainment of doctoral degrees in education by African American women. Rogers asked participants what they believed contributed to the successful completion of their doctoral program in the field of education and what events and/or factors were obstacles. Rogers (2006) reported three main factors within institutional and external domains: institutional support (institutional domain), social support (institutional and external domain), and moral support and spirituality (external domain). Albeit spirituality could be an aspect of the significant relationship role, how spirituality is balanced throughout the doctoral process was not explored beyond being viewed as a source of strength for the Black women in their time of need. Similarly, Bailey-Iddrisu (2010) studied the persistence of women of African descent in completing a doctorate and DeNeal (2008) explored
the good, bad, and ugly perspective of doctoral educational experiences of selected African American women. Bailey-Iddrisu (2010) focused on non-traditional students, based on age and minority status, who all held leadership positions in their work settings. DeNeal (2008) studied women who had already attained the doctorate degree by asking them to take a reflective look back over what they felt helped or hindered their success.

Interplay Among Work, Family, and Education

Gregory (2002) acknowledged the tripartite influence of oppression consisting of racism, classism, and sexism that Black women have had to overcome in their work, family, and education. With a growing awareness of inequities that Black women face, researchers have started to look more closely at the role balance phenomenon but from limited angles. Researchers (e.g., Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Baruch, Bierner, & Barnett, 1987) have investigated the paradoxical relationship between the work and home roles and the implications for work-family balance, but have not investigated the triadic relationship among the roles of student, worker, and participant in a significant relationship. The competition between the expectation in the work environment to be productive and efficient and the expectation of family to have satisfying personal lives, is in itself a paradox with which women in general and Black women specifically must contend, due to their embedded historical and cultural expectations (Glezer & Wolcott, 1999). Expectations to work longer hours or to take work home are two potential responsibilities that are may put stress on efforts to balance work and family (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984). In addition, technologies have increased the demand on workers’ time and attention through around the clock accessibility (McNamara, Pitt-Catsoophes, Matz-Costa, Brown, & Velcour, 2013). When the two roles (i.e., work and family) are incompatible, complying with the demands of one role make fulfilling the other more difficult (Greenhaus &
Work-family conflict defined as an occurrence when pressures from the domain of work and family are incompatible in some respect (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985); has become the leading paradigm for conceptualizing most work-family research over the past quarter-century (Hill, 2005). In Greenhaus and Beutell’s (1985) model of work-family conflict, three specific types of work-family conflict are presented: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict. Time-based conflict occurs when there are multiple roles competing for one’s time. As a result of time-based conflicts, one role typically suffers when completing the expectations of another role whose fulfillment may require prolonged focus. In addition, preoccupation occurs when a person is physically present in one role but mentally occupied by the other. Strain-based conflict occurs when strain (i.e. tension, anxiety, depression, fatigue, apathy, and irritability) in one role affects performance in the other. Behavior-based conflict occurs when a person is unable to adjust the behavioral expectations in one role to fulfill the behavioral needs of the other role. For example, a supervisory position may require self-reliance, dominance, and aggressiveness, while family members may expect warmth, nurturance, and emotional vulnerability within their interactions. Researchers have begun to question whether conflict is the only option related to work-family balance or whether work and family can facilitate one another as well (Hill, 2005). Hill (2005) suggested that more research be conducted to identify other stressors in work-family conflict as well as other roles that impact work and family.

Maher, Ford, and Thompson (2004) examined the various facets of the doctoral experience that, combined, comprise the main research question of this study. These researchers inquired about the factors that constrain, facilitate, and differentiate the doctoral degree progress
of women. They reported that time was limited for those carrying out the roles of student, mother, and wife. Thus, as women attempted to maintain childcare responsibilities and keep the marriage afloat, doctoral studies were often rushed. The demands of the three roles were competing and Maher and colleagues (2004) found that the student role was slighted to satisfy the other roles. As the number of Black women attaining doctoral degrees increases, the additional role of student will continue to be an important factor for Black women carrying multiple roles and responsibilities. Thus, the experience must be examined at the intersection of gender and race to understand the unique context that each culture creates. In this study, the role balance experience of managing work, significant relationships, and education was explored from the perspective of Black women doctoral students in counselor education programs.

**Summary**

Women’s roles have been scrutinized over the past several decades as they relate to both the benefits and the negative aspects of being a stay-at-home wife and mother as opposed to a career wife. Researchers have reported that, although working women are less distressed than housewives, both groups of women still maintain higher stress levels than employed men (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1987). Baruch, Biener, and Barnett (1987) viewed the working woman as more stressed due to the stressful nature of work versus the safe haven of home, while Pearlin (1974, as cited in Baruch, Biener & Barbett, 1987) believed that women’s stress was mainly to their employment inside the home due to its lack of structure, boundaries, and limit setting.

As employment rates change, women are spending less time in household tasks and men are spending more time in such tasks (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). In addition, the idea that multiple roles are harmful to women psychologically, medically, or relationally has been contested. Work provides a buffer from the stress in multiple aspects of women’s lives, including family
caretaking, income to help relieve monetary stress, and social support opportunities that may not be available through family members at home (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). The family structure inclusive of role balancing for women is not likely to decrease. Therefore, researchers have been encouraged to study the phenomena surrounding women in the workforce such as work-family balance and dual earner families. In addition, the phenomena should be studied within current social and cultural contexts to gain greater awareness of their effects on minority families (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). In this study, the role balance phenomenon of Black female doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships was explored.
Chapter Three

Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology for this study is described. First, a restatement of the purpose and significance of this study is presented. Second, the rationale for qualitative research and for utilizing a phenomenological design is explained. Third, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and the rationale for IPA are discussed. Fourth, research questions, participants, and procedures are introduced. Fifth, the data collection method and analysis plan are explained. Finally, trustworthiness in qualitative research and the role of the researcher are explored. The chapter concludes a summary.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of how Black female doctoral students in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs manage multiple roles, including those associated with employment and with significant relationships, within the familial and societal contexts in which they live. Hamilton (1995) argued that the historical exclusion of Black women from higher education has created a need for research to understand their educational experiences. Researchers have provided a glimpse into various aspects of the Black female educational experience; however, gaps in the literature remain to be addressed. Relevant research has focused on Black women attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and the obstacles created by a lack of mentorship (Clark, 1999; Gordon, 1999). Only limited attention has been given to the role expansion experienced by these women as they take on responsibilities as students in addition to those related to work and significant relationships.

In 2011, U.S. Census Bureau statistics indicated that, of the Black female population in the U.S., approximately 7.48% had attained a graduate level degree or higher. Of doctoral degrees
conferred in 2010, 4.29% of the recipients identified as Black females, an increase from 1976 when Black women earned only 1.36% of doctoral degrees (http://nces.ed.gov). Although the number of doctoral degrees awarded to Black women has increased, doctoral degree attainment of this population remains proportionally lower than that of the majority and other minority cultures (Schwartz, Bower, Rice, & Washington, 2003). As more Black women have entered doctoral programs, the struggles Black women face in higher education has gained attention in the professional literature. However, absent from the literature is a holistic view of the experience of balancing education, employment, and significant relationships. It was hoped that this study will contribute to the literature by examining through a holistic lens the experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students balancing work and significant relationships.

**Rationale for Qualitative Design**

Prior research on Black women in higher education includes qualitative studies describing their experience in attending a predominantly White institution of higher learning (Clark, 1999; Hamilton, 1995; Hill, 2005) as well as studies describing obstacles to achieving higher education and the socialization that made education a priority for this population (Gordon, 1999; Johnson, 1998). Although these studies provided information on the challenges created by university or cultural expectations, they did not address how Black women experience the role balance of managing school, work, and significant relationships. In this study, the phenomenon of Black female counselor education doctoral students balancing work and significant relationships was explored.

The lack of prior literature on this subject allows for an exploration of the phenomenon with no preconceived notions. According to Barnes (1992), a researcher would choose qualitative over quantitative methods for three reasons: first, there is an inability to display
complete objectivity; second, the statistical and experimental approach is not appropriate to the study’s purpose, and; third, surveys with random sampling and control groups are not applicable to understanding the topic under study. I am a member of this understudied group (specifically, Black female doctoral students in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs); therefore, I acknowledge that I could not achieve complete objectivity due to my personal experience and knowledge of this social phenomenon. Experimental methods were not appropriate for this study due to the lack of published literature in this area and the limited number of potential participants. In addition, quantitative methods cannot provide relevant information on the contextual experience of this particular group.

Understanding the rationale behind not choosing a quantitative method is significant; equally valuable is the understanding of why a qualitative method is chosen. Qualitative methods can provide an opportunity to understand understudied groups or populations through various methodologies; however, in general, the qualitative method aims to develop understanding of the meaning and experience of the lives and social world of human beings (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Frankel & Devers, 2000). Ambert, Adler, Adler, and Detzner (2011) discussed the four main goals and foci of qualitative research that sum up the rationale for the use of qualitative research in this research study: qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth by acquiring in-depth and intimate information about a small group of persons, the aim of qualitative research is to learn how and why people behave, think, and make meaning as they do, qualitative research is particularly well suited to studying family processes, qualitative research seeks discovery rather than verification.

The qualitative method most useful in this study is a phenomenological method due to its foundational view of uniqueness of personal experience. Phenomenology asserts that
understanding comes from the perspective of the experience of the person being studied (Wilson & Washington, 2007).

**Phenomenological Methodology**

Husserl has been noted as the fountainhead of phenomenology, although the origin of phenomenology can be traced back prior to Husserl’s work (Groenewald, 2004). Groenewald (2004) explained that although Franz Brentano, a teacher of Husserl, provided the foundation of phenomenology by stressing the ‘intentional nature of consciousness,’ it was Husserl who named this philosophical method and argued that people can be certain only of how things appear or present in their own consciousness. Phenomenology is the science of pure phenomena, wrapped in the perceived realities of individual consciousness (Groenewald, 2004). Researchers value phenomenology because traditional scientific methods fail to consider the consciously experiencing person (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) described the process and challenges of phenomenology by stating, “phenomenology attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment or presupposition. The challenge is to describe things as they are, to understand meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection” (p. 27). Researchers must consider the challenges of phenomenological studies as they use the phenomenological method as a guide to conducting research.

Phenomenology guides the researcher in determining how a question should be approached. Phenomenology affirms the constructivist view that each person should be seen as unique, and that to understand a person one must understand his or her context (Nicholls, 2009). A phenomenologist seeks subjective in-depth understanding and interpretation of experience rather than attempting to encapsulate meaning into an objective mass reality (Williams & Paterson, 2009). This process places value on individual experience and allows themes to
emerge, which is a role of qualitative research in general, according to Hewitt-Taylor (2001). Regardless of outcomes, the intent of phenomenological research is strictly to capture the essence of the lived experience (Creswell, 2007; Williams & Paterson, 2009). The purpose of my study was to gain insight into the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students in counselor education programs who maintain full-time employment and intimate relationships. A phenomenological approach was the best choice to gain insight into this phenomenon.

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

Phenomenology is the qualitative research method I used to examine the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students in counselor education programs who are maintaining both full-time employment and significant relationships. An analysis method must be selected to provide interpretation of the events; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilized. IPA, developed by Smith (2004), is based on the hermeneutical underpinnings of phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenological research, as first introduced by Husserl and Dilthey, is an attempt to understand world phenomena as they are presented (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). Husserl believed that an experience should be examined on its own terms in the context in which it occurs while examining the meaning that one may give to one’s own experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Husserl acknowledged the need for bracketing, a process during which researchers put aside the familiarity of their everyday worlds to concentrate on the participants’ perceptions. Husserl’s work introduced the importance of experience and perception and lent credibility to phenomenological research; Heidegger, Merleau-Pontly, and Sartre further developed the theoretical underpinnings of IPA (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).
Hermeneutics is a method or principle of interpretation. Three influential hermeneutic theorists are Schleiermacher, Heidegger, and Gadamer. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) described Schleiermacher’s hermeneutical process as grammatical, paying attention to exact text, and as psychological, paying attention to the individuality of the speaker. Cohen, Kahn, and Steeves (2000) shared Heidegger and Gadamer suggestion that, “hermeneutic phenomenology is research into how people go about understanding the world in which they live…and understanding the phenomena of the world as they are presented to us” (p. 5). Thus, exploring and interpreting the subjective experience is necessary to assign meaning and present new information or a new perspective on previously studied topics.

Another influence on IPA is idiography, which is focused on the particular (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Idiography is not concerned with generalizability of a group or population level; rather, it is concerned with the experience of particular people with a particular phenomenon and in a particular context. Therefore, given the idiographic intent of IPA, the method utilizes small, purposively selected and carefully situated samples to address the particular phenomenon in question (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The aim of IPA is to explore subjective participant details of a topic of study through the conceptualization of a researcher (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999); consequently, the researcher’s lens is considered to be a valuable tool in the IPA process. Two stages of interpretation are involved in IPA: “the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 53). This process involves in-depth systematic review of each participant’s interview as information is grouped into coded themes while giving attention to the distinctive experience. Themes are then identified to provide the essence of the phenomenon
being studied. For this process, a small number of purposefully selected participants is recommended, typically three to six in doctoral research, to achieve a thorough account of individual and shared experiences (Clark, 1999; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

In this study, IPA provided a guide to examining the personal world of the participants while not discounting the experience that I bring to the process. Smith, Jarman, and Osborn (1999) stated that the researchers own conceptions may cause complications, but are required to make sense of another’s personal world through interpretive activity. Hence, my personal involvement with this topic cannot be ignored; rather, it was used as a tool in IPA to understand the participants’ experience.

Through utilizing IPA to gain insight into the lived experience of Black female doctoral students who are maintaining full-time employment and intimate relationships, it was my hope that the information provided would be a resource for future cohorts of minority women who are considering the pursuit of a doctoral degree. In addition, I hoped that leaders in universities and the families directly and indirectly involved with these women might gain understanding of issues specific to women of color and suggest means to assist these women through their programs of study to degree completion.

**Research Questions**

Research questions serve multiple purposes within the context of a qualitative study. Central questions broadly explore the phenomenon and sub-questions follow to investigate and create a narrower focus (Creswell, 2007). The role balance experience of Black women was explored through the primary research question: What is the lived experience of Black women who are pursuing doctoral degrees in counselor education while maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships?
Sub-questions were asked to gain a narrow focus on each individual participant’s experience. For example, each participant had the opportunity to define significant relationships in her life. Participants also had the opportunity to further discuss their experiences of engaging in the multiple roles and to discuss any strain felt during the process. Lastly, participants shared support factors that influenced the role balance experience. Sub-questions included: (a) What do participants consider to be significant relationships in their lives? (b) What roles do the participants feel are most pertinent to their role balance experience? (c) How do the roles influence one another?

**Researcher Positionality**

My personal experience led me to this topic as a research interest. Four years ago, as a married Black woman with a full-time job, I decided to return to school to pursue my dream of obtaining a doctorate and entering the ranks of the professoriate. I relied on the word of mouth experience of other Black women as a source to inform my decision to continue my education. For example, I was encouraged to realize early on that, as I am a Black female, few will look like me and that I should expect to work harder and struggle longer than the average student just because I am Black. The assumption was that no professor would assist me through my journey. Upon my enrollment, I began to encounter some of the obstacles discussed by other women of color who had gone before me but, fortunately, not all of the aforementioned obstacles occurred. The lack of professors with whom to identify and the lack of mentoring relationships between Black female doctoral students and professors were present but not the main source of struggle for me. Rather, the struggles of attending a predominantly White university (PWI) paled in comparison to the struggles of balancing my roles of wife, professional counselor, and student. These issues were not included in the warning provided by my informants. My struggle
throughout this time has been to negotiate time spent within all three roles without slighting any of them. This has been no easy feat. Although I am managing this process, I was curious to hear from other women about their experience, to learn if this is typical in the experience of Black women balancing multiple roles while adding the role of student.

I believe that my personal experience thus far has shaped my views regarding the expected experience of Black women balancing the multiple roles of employee and student while participating in a significant relationship. Based on my personal experience and attachment to the research question, it was imperative that in my role as a researcher I set aside my personal views and allowed the participants to paint the picture of their experiences, and that I analyzed the data through an unbiased lens. Thus, in order to be unbiased I first acknowledged my experience that either validated or negated the preconceived notions that contribute to the biases that I currently hold.

My personal biases have come to light during the experiences that I have encountered throughout my time as a doctoral student. The first bias that I must admit is the belief that I would get minimal emotional support during my studies due to a lack of understanding of the struggles that seemed specific to women of color. For example, I managed to maintain full-time employment, a healthy marriage, and strong relational ties with my extended family, all while attending the University of New Orleans as a full-time doctoral student. During that time, I felt a perceived lack of emotional support that I thought was needed to continue my educational endeavors. Through life transitions such as a move out of town due to my husband’s career and health issues, I was unable to effectively verbalize my needs due to a perceived lack of identification with professors. This is just one of the examples that left me feeling emotionally unsupported through my journey. From that and other minor experiences, I formed the bias that
I, along with other Black women, would have to fight alone to achieve the ultimate educational goal without a great deal of understanding and support from faculty at a PWI.

Another bias that I acknowledge is the assumption that what little support I would get would come from faculty of the same race and cultural background. My experience has proven this bias to have little merit. I conducted presentations with one faculty member, and conducted research for an article with two other faculty members, all White females. When I experienced difficulties during the writing process, it was White faculty members who met with me on the weekends, conversed with me over breaks, and assured me that I will make it through the dissertation process. My initial assumption was that I would get that type of assistance only from Black faculty, but that has not been the case at this point in my journey.

In addition, I had ideas about how the doctoral process would impact my personal relationships, mainly with my husband. I initially believed that my husband would resent my time spent away from him to accommodate my studies; however, this bias has proved incorrect. During the trials of doctoral studies and health problems, my marriage has only gotten stronger. As I felt defeated due to my perceived lack of faculty support at times, my husband strengthened me by identifying with my struggle and reassuring me that I could achieve greatness. When my health failed, my husband picked up the pieces of our broken life by fulfilling the roles that were unofficially assigned to me as woman of the house while continuing with his own responsibilities. His response to my battle with educational achievement and career development has changed my view of relationships; although, I am able to recognize that my experience is just one of many and my experience may be the exception to the rule. Nevertheless, my experiences are mine and mine alone, and whether they confirmed or contradicted my biases, I have
acknowledged them and continued to reflect upon personal biases throughout the research process in an effort to remain transparent to the reader.

**Participants**

A small, purposive sample of five was chosen in consideration of the detailed case-by-case analysis of IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The method of analysis (IPA) encourages the use of small sample sizes so that attention can be given to the depth rather than the breadth of each interview (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Using purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants who will best help explore the phenomenon in question. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) noted that there is no right sample size in an IPA analysis, although IPA benefits from a small number of cases with a concentrated focus. These authors encouraged, as a rough guide, three to six participants. Optimal sample size “depends upon the parameters of the phenomenon under study” (Marshall, 1996, p. 522). Thus, the sample size in this study was reflective of the population being studied.

Participants met the following criteria to be included in the study: currently enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education doctoral program, self-identity as a Black or African American female, engaged in a significant relationship as defined by the participant, and working full-time which was defined as 30 hours or more per week of paid employment. As the target population for this study was Black females currently enrolled in doctoral studies in counselor education, the potential sample size was limited. Therefore, to maximize the potential participants in this study, variables such as having children or degree progress were not be used as selection criteria but were acknowledged in the discussion of results. Another aspect to consider, related to participant selection, is obtaining saturation of the data. Saturation is evident when replication occurs and when data account for all aspects of the phenomenon being studied.
To accomplish in-depth interviews and data saturation with this minority population, five participants were interviewed for this study.

### Participant Demographics

Five participants were interviewed, all of whom were counselor education doctoral students enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education program while balancing full-time employment and at least one self-defined significant relationship. All five participants identified as Black or African American. Their ages ranged from 26 to 38 and their mean age was 32 (31.8). Participants attended two different CACREP-accredited counselor education programs; none were in the same doctoral cohort.

Participants were asked to describe the roles in which they were engaged prior to entering doctoral studies and to provide an explanation of changes that occurred once engaged in doctoral studies. At the time of the interviews all participants were currently engaged in doctoral studies, work, and reported being concurrently involved in self-defined significant relationships. Five participants described the roles in which they were engaged as well as the ways they work to achieve balance. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants for confidentiality purposes. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1.

### Giselle

Giselle is a 29-year-old Black female enrolled in her second year as a full-time doctoral student. She is currently enrolled in full-time coursework and anticipates graduating in the summer of 2016. At Giselle’s institution, all doctoral students are expected to meet four criteria to complete the program: successful completion of coursework, general examination, dissertation proposal defense, and dissertation final defense. Students enrolled in Giselle’s program enroll in coursework at their own pace and move through coursework and the dissertation phase
individually while engaging in roles such as advisee, teaching assistant, supervisor, and supervisee. In addition to Giselle’s doctoral responsibilities, she is employed as a full-time clinician and reports maintaining two significant relationships. Giselle reported that the most significant relationships in her life are her relationships with God and her family.

Christy

Christy is a 37-year-old Black female enrolled in her third year as a full-time doctoral student. She is currently enrolled in full-time coursework and anticipates graduating in the fall of 2016. At Christy’s institution, all doctoral students are expected to meet four criteria to complete the program: successful completion of coursework, general examination, dissertation proposal defense, and dissertation final defense. Students enrolled in Giselle’s program enroll in coursework at their own pace and move through coursework and the dissertation phase individually while engaging in roles such as advisee, teaching assistant, supervisor, and supervisee. In addition to Christy’s doctoral responsibilities, she is employed full-time and reports having four significant relationships. Christy’s significant relationships are her relationships with her self, her son, her boyfriend, and her mother.

Amanda

Amanda is a 26-year-old Black female enrolled in her second year as a full-time doctoral student. She is currently enrolled in full-time coursework and anticipates graduating in 2016. At Amanda’s institution students enroll in coursework and move through the program as a cohort. Following the completion of coursework, a dissertation must be completed and successfully defended. In addition to Amanda’s doctoral responsibilities, she is employed full-time and reports currently maintaining three significant relationships. Amanda’s significant relationships are her relationships with her boyfriend, her mother, and her father.
**Vera Firefly**

Vera Firefly is a 38-year-old Black female enrolled in her fifth year as a doctoral student. Vera Firefly is currently enrolled part-time, as she has completed her coursework. She previously has been enrolled as a full-time doctoral student. She anticipates graduating spring 2016. At Vera Firefly’s institution, all doctoral students are expected to meet four criteria to complete the program: successful completion of coursework, general examination, dissertation proposal defense, and dissertation final defense. Students in Vera Firefly’s program enroll in coursework at their own pace and move through coursework and the dissertation phase individually while engaging in roles such as advisee, teaching assistant, supervisor, and supervisee. In addition to Vera Firefly’s doctoral responsibilities, she is self-employed as the owner of a startup company, working 30 or more hours weekly. She reports maintaining three significant relationships. Vera Firefly reported that the most significant relationships in her life are her relationships with self, her children, and her husband.

**Africa**

Africa is a 29-year-old Black female enrolled in her second year as a full-time doctoral student. She is currently enrolled in full-time coursework and anticipates graduating in 2016. At Africa’s institution students enrolled in coursework move through the program as a cohort. Following the completion of coursework, a dissertation must be completed and successfully defended. In addition to Africa’s doctoral responsibilities, she works 30 or more hours weekly as a business owner and reports currently maintaining two significant relationships. Africa’s reported significant relationships are her relationships with her family and spirituality.
Table 1. Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Giselle</th>
<th>Christy</th>
<th>Amanda</th>
<th>Vera Firefly</th>
<th>Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Mother/Father</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40 plus</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30 plus</td>
<td>40 plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>2nd year,</td>
<td>3rd year,</td>
<td>2nd year,</td>
<td>5th year,</td>
<td>2nd year,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status in</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated</td>
<td>Summer 2016</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Spring 2016</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedures

Participants were solicited through university listserves, counseling listserves, and through personal recruitment and snowballing. An invitation to participate (see Appendix A) in the study was initially sent via e-mail to department chairs at five CACREP-accredited universities within a 400-mile radius of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, that have a counselor education doctoral program. Following the initial recruitment initiative at universities within a 400-mile radius of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a second invitation to participate was sent to all CACREP-accredited universities listed on the CACREP website. I provided an attached letter (see
Appendix B) that included the researcher’s name, contact information, and purpose and procedures of my study with a request for dissemination. In addition, information regarding the interview process was provided: the face-to-face interview was scheduled to last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and a follow up phone interview was planned to not exceed 30 minutes.

Once participants agreed to participate in this study, a recruitment letter (see Appendix C) was sent to each potential participant. The recruitment letter reiterated the information provided in the initial e-mail, the intended use of results and confidentiality, and participants right of refusal and right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Possible benefits and potential harm of participation were explained. Two copies of the informed consent (see Appendix D) were provided with the researcher contact information and directions to sign one form and return to the researcher via e-mail. The consent also gave the researcher permission to contact the participant via telephone in three to five business days to discuss the informed consent, answer any questions the participant might have about the study or the researcher, and arrange interviews. The conversation between the researcher and the participant was informal and assessed the participant’s appropriateness for this study. Demographic questions were asked regarding age, sex, race, educational and employment status, and willingness to participate in this study, as recommended by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009).

After the initial interviews with the first three participants were completed, efforts were made to secure additional participants that were needed for the study. The snowball method of sampling was employed. The snowballing method utilizes respondents to refer researchers to other possible participants who share the characteristics of interest for the study (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Snowballing can be a useful method of obtaining participants in an IPA study (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Risks of snowball sampling
include encountering hostility and suspicion from targeted individuals and problems with establishing trust with respondents (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). I gained trust by readily sharing the procedures of this study to reduce suspicion and incorporating the same tactics used to obtain initial participants such as providing a recruitment letter and informed consent.

Snowball sampling, a common method used in qualitative research, is obtaining a sample of a narrowly defined population through referrals (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Snowball sampling is a common strategy adopted by many researchers based on their effectiveness in reaching the desired population as well as their implementation flexibility (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). For example, snowball sampling can be implemented by asking participants to give contact information for persons who they believe are experiencing the phenomenon under investigation or by contacting potential participants via a directory provided by an external source. In this study, snowball sampling included asking participants to provide the contact information of persons that they believed fit the parameters of this study and conducting informal requests for participants at conferences and presentations.

Prior to engaging in the research for this study, I obtained approval from my committee and the University of New Orleans Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval letter (see Appendix E) included a description of this study as well as all information relating to the data collection process. In addition, benefits and risks to participants were acknowledged and informed consent was included in the application. Participants were informed that during the data collection and analysis process measures would be taken and procedures would be followed to protect them and their personal information. First, participants were asked during the interview to provide a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes. Pseudonyms were used on transcripts, researcher notes, observations, and any additional information that was gathered.
throughout the data collection period. Second, participants were assured that all information would be stored on a password-protected computer and hard copies would be stored in a locked filing cabinet, both of which are located in my home and to which only I have access. Third, participants were informed that a third party provider would transcribe the initial interview and sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix F). Finally, participants were told that all information will be kept for a period of five years, and then will be shredded to protect the participants’ privacy.

Additional procedures that were implemented included conducting observations, keeping field notes, and maintaining a reflective journal. Observations of the participants prior to the interview were garnered through initial impressions and information gained prior to the start of the initial interview. Once the initial interview began, field notes were used to easily recall important details that may have occurred. Body language, expressions, and ideas that occurred throughout the interview were noted within the field notes as well as any significant information about the interview locations. Before, during, and after the participant interviews, a reflective journal was maintained to track emotions of the researcher as well as identify any biases that came up during the data collection process. Notes were separated under the three headings (observations, field notes, and journal) as a quick reference guide to aid in the data collection process.

**Data Collection**

A characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher collects data in a natural setting where the experience is prevalent (Creswell, 2009). Interviews were conducted via in person and Face Time at a mutually agreed-upon place and time. The interviewees were given options regarding location and time as a way to reduce any undue stress that might be caused by
the commitment to participate in this study. This process also allowed for a more organic interview process.

Data collection consisted of initial demographic information collected at onset, video and/or audio-recorded interviews, and transcription of initial interviews. As this study focused on the value of individual experience, the most meaningful way to collect data was through a semi-structured interview conducted by the researcher in the role of a participant observer. My role as a participant observer fulfilled the goal of exploring a topic to which the participant and I both relate as well as keeping both the participant and the researcher aware of the purpose. In the interview I did not look at the interviewees, I looked with them in dialogue to search for understanding and meaning, as suggested by Bygstad and Munkvold (2007). This interview style, as described by Smith, Flowers, and Larkins (2009), assists the researcher and the interviewee to have “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 57). An interview guide (see Appendix G) was used to help facilitate the “conversation” to ensure that the discussion stayed within the boundaries of the research topic (Smith, Flowers, & Larkins, 2009).

**Data Analysis**

Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) is the method of analysis that was employed to gain insight into the experience of Black female doctoral students balancing employment and intimate relationships. In phenomenological studies, the validity is determined by the integrity of the researcher (Barnes, 1992). As Jackson, Drummond, and Camara (2007) stated, each researcher has the responsibility to conduct his or her study with as much objectivity, rigor, and ethical diligence as possible. With this in mind, I sought to be a transparent researcher with stated intentions and an organized approach that left no room for rhetoric or tricks to deceive the participant or the reader.
IPA entails a six-step process to examine data using an in-depth within case analysis for each individual interview: reading and re-reading, initial noting, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, moving to the next case, and looking for patterns across cases (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The first step in analysis involves reading and re-reading the transcript interview to become intimate with the story while notating on one side of the margin any notes regarding significant statements and using the other margin to note emerging themes. Once the first interview was complete, I completed a within-case analysis utilizing three strategies described as the analytic process of IPA analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkins, 2009). First, pawing through each interview line by line and allowing themes to emerge, a process commonly referred to as open coding, extrapolated individual statements and understandings. Utilizing techniques such as key word in context (KWIC), or looking at words or phrases within the context in which they were used, helped me identify idiosyncratic statements that might hold a different meaning to the participant than to the researcher. Statement identification also included searching for word repetitions, metaphors, and analogies. Although the information given by the participant was the main foundation for creating meaningful data, I also looked for what was missing or unstated. According to Ryan and Bernard (2010), the absence of text may indicate assumptions, sensitive information, or even distrust of the interviewer, and much can be learned from what is missing.

The second step in IPA analysis is to examine content and language used to provide a comprehensive set of notes and comments regarding the data. A constant comparative analysis method, first introduced by grounded theory developers Glaser and Strauss (2009), was utilized to compartmentalize individual themes into overarching categories to which I assigned meaning.
based on the theoretical foundation of family systems. Family systems theory assisted me to understand the contextual experience of the participants.

Breaking up the narrative and creating themes and sub-themes while ensuring that the integrity of the original content is maintained for cross-reference accomplish the third step, developing emergent themes. This process is also termed within-case analysis due to its focus on a single participant interview. Original interview data codes are used to create theme clusters, which are placed in a table that displays excerpts of the original data, the code where the text can be located in the transcript, and the corresponding theme.

The fourth step, searching for connections across emergent themes, entails organizing the newly formed themes into groups so that applicable themes fit together. Because the initial themes are listed in chronological order, the goal in the fourth step is to disregard time and find commonalities between themes. Once themes were grouped and my interpretative account was added, the information was e-mailed to the respective participant for the purpose of member checking. After each participant received and reviewed her transcript, a follow-up interview was scheduled, estimated not to exceed 30 minutes, to validate initial analysis as well as to allow each participant the opportunity to clarify, change, or add any information. The follow-up interview focused on member checking, a practice used by researchers to allow participants to verify or elaborate on case descriptions and interpretations (Bygstad & Munkvold, 2007). I presented a summary to my participants, including the initial themes that I had, and allowed them to verify its content. This process created a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participant and added to the reliability of the study.

The fifth step begins with the next case; steps 1 through 4 are repeated for each remaining interview.
Finally, the sixth step in IPA analysis involves a cross-case analysis to establish connections between cases, themes in cases that illuminate other cases, and themes that are potent throughout all cases. The cross-case analysis begins with a complete master list of themes from all completed interviews. Contributive themes are constructed and listed in a table format with all interviews incorporated into the coding process. This process allows connections to be organized into a coherent and organized thematic account of the cases, making sure each contributive theme connects to the underlying theme, which in turn is connected to the original excerpts from participants (Chapman & Smith, 2002). Finally, themes are translated into a narrative that includes any significant details to assist the reader in understanding the experience under study.

**Trustworthiness**

As researchers strive to replicate the rigor or trustworthiness of quantitative research while being true to the qualitative epistemology, new criteria have been offered by qualitative researchers (Tobin & Begley, 2004). In both quantitative and qualitative research, validity involves checking for accuracy of findings by employing certain procedures, whereas reliability indicates a consistent approach across the study (Creswell, 2009). Threats to validity and reliability exist in all research; however, certain considerations apply in qualitative research due to the subjective nature of the raw data. Data are comprised primarily of words and are subject to interpretation by the researcher. Bowen (2005) encouraged researchers who conduct studies from an interpretive paradigm not to think in the conventional positivistic manner; rather, they are encouraged to think in terms of trustworthiness. “In seminal work in the 1980s, Guba and Lincoln substituted reliability and validity with the parallel concept of ‘trustworthiness,’ containing four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (Morse,

**Credibility.** Credibility (internal validity) refers to the rigor of a study and the truth in findings (Bowen, 2005; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). A research study must demonstrate integrity and competence as well as legitimacy (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Credibility was established in this study through member checking and researcher transparency. Observations, individual interviews, and documents helped to explain the participants’ contexts, whereas member checking allowed the participants to match their words and my analysis with what they intended to say (Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004). The member checking process allowed participants the opportunity to review transcripts of their initial interviews to verify that their points were accurately conveyed and interpreted. Another tool that assisted with credibility was to make explicit the researcher’s background, qualifications, and experience. The transparency of the researcher is essential in qualitative research, as the major instrument is the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Creswell (2009) encouraged the researcher to be open and share how her background may shape the interpretation of information presented. As well as researcher experience or bias, any other information that could directly or indirectly impact data collection, analysis, or interpretation of the results was divulged (Patton, 1999). My personal experience as it related to the research is discussed later in this chapter. Member checking and transparency were the two most useful tools to achieve credibility in this study.

**Transferability.** Transferability (external validity) is concerned with the generalizability of the study (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Due to the naturalistic nature of this study and considering the constructionist view of phenomena, no attempt to generalize findings to a larger population
was made. However, the overarching themes are central to the individual participants within the study. Shenton (2004) argued that, although conventional generalizability may not be possible in qualitative research due to the specific context and the small sample, it should not be dismissed. Enough information is provided to allow the readers to make general connections where they see fit. I provided a systematic guide to the methodology as well as a systematic guide to the analysis process. In addition, original interview texts were incorporated into the discussion of the analysis to allow the reader to understand the connections being made from data to interpretation.

**Dependability.** Dependability (reliability) is closely related to credibility, in that if the study is credible it should also be dependable or able to be repeated (Shenton, 2004; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Tobin and Begley (2004) recommended providing an audit trail to allow others to replicate the study and obtain similar results. I documented the procedures being used to collect, validate, analyze, and report the data in this study. Utilizing IPA’s systematic guide for analysis limited any variation from the systemic procedure in this study and provided boundaries for future researchers if the study is replicated. Maintaining and incorporating the observations, field notes, and reflective journal also provided a guide to understanding the final analysis and helped distinguish any differences that might arise in a future replication of this study. Utilizing a thorough audit trail can also be helpful in providing confirmability (Shenton, 2004; Tobin & Begley, 2004). My audit trail consists of observations, notes, and journal entries maintained throughout the data gathering and analysis process.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability (objectivity) is ensuring neutrality within the data analysis and interpretation (Shenton, 2004; Tobin & Begley, 2004). The detailed methodological description will help the reader see the connections being made. Researcher biases were also
discussed and tools for bracketing implemented throughout the study to minimize interpretations drawn from the researcher’s context. Bracketing occurred by utilizing personal journals and interpersonal process recall (IPR). IPR, a training model used by counselors in training, involves reviewing sessions of expert counselors intentionally displaying specific counseling skills (Crews, Smith, Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, Casey, & Urbani, 2005). Following the demonstration, the expert describes the naturally occurring thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations experienced at that time. After review, counselors in training describe their thoughts and feelings related to the counseling session. This method was modified for the purpose of this study in that I reviewed recorded interviews and journal entries to assist in recognition of personal biases. In addition, diagrams were incorporated into the discussion of results.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the methodology for this study has been examined in detail. A rationale for this phenomenological study was presented. IPA was introduced with a brief history, and its purpose in this study was explained. Research questions were provided along with participant selection criteria. The procedures and data analysis method were presented and the interview protocol was discussed. Finally, the data analysis plan was fully explained, trustworthiness was discussed, and the role of the researcher was presented.
Chapter Four

Results

In this chapter, the findings are reported and the results of the study are presented. Interviews were conducted using IPA, an approach that places value on the individual’s perceived experience.

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of how Black female doctoral students in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs manage multiple roles, including those associated with employment and with significant relationships, within the familial and societal contexts in which they live. Interviews were conducted utilizing an open-ended semi-structured interview format. Each interview was transcribed via a third party agency and a copy was e-mailed to each participant for member checking. Included in each e-mail was a list of initial themes that emerged during the data analysis. Transcripts were then coded into groups, groups were clustered into theme categories, and themes were cross-analyzed and clustered into super-ordinate themes. Throughout the analysis process, a journal was maintained to reflect on researcher biases and document each step taken.

Data Analysis Procedures and Research Questions

Following the IPA six-step analysis procedures outlined in Chapter 3, an in-depth analysis was conducted for each participant’s interview transcript. The first step (reading and re-reading) was conducted following each interview, which allowed me the opportunity to notice patterns in individual transcripts. During the second step (initial noting), I compiled the data collected (i.e., transcript, observations, notes taken during interview) for each participant and identified roles and relationships that were prevalent during each interview. Roles and significant relationships identified by each participant are noted in Table 1. Then, following step
three (developing emergent themes), initial themes were labeled in each interview transcript while consulting the data collected during step two. Once initial themes were labeled and compiled, member checking was implemented to verify accuracy of analysis and to ensure participant agreement with theme analysis. Step four (searching for connections across emergent themes) was followed to collapse initial themes into overarching themes to describe each participant’s role balance experience as interpreted by the researcher. The fifth step began with the next case; steps 1 through 4 were repeated for each remaining interview. Finally, a cross-case analysis gave way to a list of themes that established connections between cases, illuminated other cases, and were potent throughout all cases. The conclusive list of themes was considered to be the super-ordinate themes that were used to answer the research questions.

The primary research question was: What is the lived experience of Black women who are pursuing doctoral degrees in counselor education while maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships? Sub-questions were identified to assist in creating a lens to understand the explored experience: (a) What do participants consider to be significant relationships in their lives? (b) What roles do the participants feel are most pertinent to their role balance experience? (c) How do the roles influence one another?

Quotes from each participant interview were used to support the overarching and super-ordinate themes that were extrapolated from the raw data. Quotes and themes were used to support the findings presented to answer the research questions. Figure 1 illustrates the process of data collection and analysis.
Participants’ Interviews

The within case analysis of the five participants in this study identified a total of 33 themes that contributed to the role balance experience of maintaining education, work, and significant relationships. The themes are depicted in Table 2.
Table 2. *Themes by Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Giselle (6)</th>
<th>Christy (8)</th>
<th>Amanda (6)</th>
<th>Vera Firefly (7)</th>
<th>Africa (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My background doesn’t define me</td>
<td>Responsibilities and expectations based on race</td>
<td>Validation and sense of belonging</td>
<td>Change in homeostasis</td>
<td>Responsibilities and expectations based on race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the bar</td>
<td>Others pushed me</td>
<td>Self doubt</td>
<td>Personal relationships suffered</td>
<td>Perseverance to achieve goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making it work</td>
<td>Education changed me</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>Consideration of the self</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relationships were impacted</td>
<td>Finding myself in a new role</td>
<td>Desire to connect</td>
<td>Fighting against racial stereotypes</td>
<td>The education effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant internal battle</td>
<td>Constant prioritizing</td>
<td>Making sacrifices</td>
<td>Role compromise</td>
<td>Internal metamorphosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing</td>
<td>Fight for relationships</td>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Constant prioritizing</td>
<td>Support systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faith</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Giselle

Giselle is a 29-year-old Black female enrolled in her second year as a full-time doctoral student while working 40 hours a week. Giselle identified two relationships as significant in her life, family and God. When discussing how her roles as a student, employee, and member in a significant relationship fit together, she shared, “It’s a lot juggling all these relationships, roles. It is a lot, but at the same time it’s rewarding.” While Giselle asserted that “prioritizing” is the key to balance she also noted a sense of responsibility for her family and race that pushes her to strive for success. Giselle stated, “I feel that there is more responsibility on my to set the bar.” Although responsibility was woven throughout Giselle’s interview, she also emphasized the support from family (particularly her mother) and her university as major factors to her obtaining role balance. Quotes were used to support interpreted themes from the data.

Emerging Categories and Themes

Open coding of the transcript of the interview with Giselle resulted in 10 individual categories. Connections were identified among the categories, which were then clustered into themes. This IPA analysis process produced six themes identified as central to understanding Giselle’s role balance experience. Theme selection was based on factors such as body language, frequency of category in interview text, observations, and notes. The six themes were my background doesn’t define me, setting the bar, making it work, personal relationships were impacted, constant internal battle, and prioritizing.

Giselle spoke at length about the idea that my background doesn’t define me. Specifically, she verbalized how she interprets her experiences as being inherently different than those of the majority culture and the ramifications of that. For example, she discussed the perils
of growing up in a lower socioeconomic household that limited her exposure to higher education. She acknowledged that she was embarking on new territory with no roadmap. She stated:

One of the things that I think is different for me is, like I said, coming from a background where neither of my parents has experienced college. They haven’t been through any of that, so I feel like coming from that background, I’m exploring a lot of this, it’s absolutely new to me.

Giselle connected her familial socioeconomic situation to a self-imposed responsibility to set the bar, which provided a context to understand her complete role balance experience. Giselle stated:

Hey, I have to set the bar because there’s not a lot of me, there’s not a lot of it. Not only that, I feel like there is more responsibility on me to set the bar for my siblings, and my cousins, and my godchildren, whose parents did not go to college…and so I realize that I’m almost bearing the weight of the culture on my shoulders.

The perceived pressure that Giselle felt to provide an example for other Black women, specifically her extended family, severed as a motivating force for her to make it work. Giselle stated, “I have to make it work” several times throughout the interview when questioned about the balancing of multiple roles. She discussed the personal advantages and disadvantages of being a doctoral student while maintaining multiple roles but explained that, regardless of obstacles, “I have to make it work.” She continued, “It (school) did give me some confidence…I felt more confident as a person…I felt proud as an individual.” Giselle focused on the lack of time as a disadvantage and a major struggle for her to balance. She reported, “the time restraints… there were some things I had to give up that were very important to me, less time was spent with family members, less time for myself.” Through sharing the perceived benefits
and struggles of her experience she reiterated, “hey, I have to set the bar because there’s not a lot of me, there’s not a lot of it… you just have to make it work.”

On the theme of personal relationships were impacted, Giselle acknowledged the relationships that were significant in her life and shared their impact. She focused on her two identified significant relationships with family and God. When asked about the impact on her significant relationships, Giselle stated, “less time was spent with family members, less time for myself. I hardly see the gym anymore. Personal interest, family time, my non-profit – those are a few of the things that had to change.” Specifically, she addressed the relationship with her sister, stating:

I think it did effect our relationship a little bit because everything I do, everywhere I go, she wants to be there. Her having that time with me, we don’t have as much and so I do think it impacted it.

As for her relationship with God, Giselle acknowledged that most people catch up with work on the weekends. Based on her religion, she admitted that her weekend does not allow a great deal of time for her to complete assignments, which puts an even greater strain on her weekdays.

When she was asked how she balanced a weekday job with weekend religious commitments and got schoolwork completed, she responded:

Saturday, it’s like not even an option for me to give that up because to me, that is, I don’t really have a choice. That’s my commitment to God and I feel like that’s what He commanded and that’s what I’m going do. So I’m not willing to jeopardize my relationship with Him in doing what I feel is right for a diploma or for school.

Giselle also acknowledged that while her spiritual obligations may add an additional obstacle in her role balance, her strength to accomplish her goals derives from her spirituality:
A lot of strength comes from my spiritual relationship and believing that there’s nothing that I can’t accomplish without God, and I got Him. So just knowing that gives me the ability to keep pushing forward, and balancing it, all of this. And that’s where a lot of my peace and my sanity comes in because I feel like if I didn’t have that, I would be burned out. I would be complaining. I would be aggravated and upset. Because I rely on Him so much I still can be at peace and be able to juggle these things.

Giselle viewed her conflict with religious obligations and schoolwork as the same as conflict with any two competing roles. She stated:

So yeah, Sundays, a lot of times Sunday comes between family, they all go to church on Sunday, so I’ll do my school work while they’re at church. And then once they get home, at my grandparents’ house…we all go over there and just hang out for the rest of the Sunday and eat Sunday dinner. So, I’m able or I just bring my laptop, and I’m working while I’m spending family time.

Speaking more specifically about conflict, Giselle stated that she has a constant internal battle regarding which role she should be engaged in, at any given moment:

With my work here, there are times where I feel like I need to be doing something here at the office, but yet I have this assignment that’s due. So, which one do I do? Now and then, when do I cram this other one that I left out hanging out to get done? So it’s constantly competition between all the different roles and hats that I wear.

Throughout Giselle’s interview she discussed shifting, juggling, and managing multiple roles. She acknowledged role strain being present through the process of managing her role in education, work, and significant relationships. However, she viewed prioritizing as the glue that keeps all of her roles operating. She shared, “I had to learn how to make a list and prioritize that
list and go with the flow and whatever gets done that day, it got done, and whatever didn’t I would pick up.” When asked how she balances her life she stated, “Prioritizing number one, making the time when it’s necessary but also taking the time for myself when I need it.” She went on to provide this advice to others: “prioritize and schedule…be organized…take care mentally…and take a break when they just have to.”

**Summary of Giselle’s Interview**

The six themes identified in this interview, as shown in Table 2, (*my background doesn’t define me, setting the bar, personal relationships impacted, constant internal battle, prioritizing*) provided insight into Giselle’s perception of her role balance experience as a Black female doctoral student maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships. Giselle identified two significant relationships at the onset of the interview, family and spirituality, with the emphasis placed on spirituality. Upon analysis it was noticed that Giselle alluded to a third significant relationship with self. Giselle was able to identify a context for understanding her experience as well as information to support her perception of her experience. She was able to see benefits and disadvantages of each role, although she acknowledged her constant internal struggle to prioritize her roles. She was adamant that constant juggling and prioritizing is the main way to achieve balance.

**Christy**

Christy is a 37-year-old Black female enrolled in her second year as a full-time doctoral student while working 40 plus hours a week. Christy identified four relationships as significant in her life: daughter, partner, mother, and self. Christy shared her perception of her role balance experience within cultural and spiritual paradigms that guide her life. She also provided insight
into her personal journey to achieve balance while balancing education, work, and significant relationships.

**Emerging Categories and Themes**

An interpretation of the interview transcripts with Christy originally resulted in 17 individual categories. The same process used with the previous participant was utilized to analyze the data collected from Christy. As a result of the IPA process, the categories were collapsed into eight themes: *responsibilities and expectation based on race, others pushed me, education changed me, finding myself in a new role, constant prioritizing, fight for relationships, faith,* and *support systems.*

Christy emphasized throughout the interview her *responsibilities and expectations based on race,* and how these have impacted her experience through academe and the work place. She reported:

I’m working three jobs and the White male who is my equal, he has one job and his is making more money that I am, we share the same title. And then, here I am and I mean in terms of the doc program… it seems as though a variance, the Caucasian students who are in the program are of a higher socioeconomic status. The expectations are, they’re not the same, they’re more for us (Black women)… we’ve always had to juggle.

She continued:

We’ve always had to balance multiple roles. I think one of the reasons why I have taken on so many roles… it’s just expected. It’s just expected you have a smile on your face and you hold your head up and you better step out looking together, it better be together… and that’s what I signed up for because we’re supposed to be able to do that. ‘You’re a strong Black woman’, you’re supposed to be able to handle all of this… with a
good attitude while you are doing it because if you don’t, then you are angry. Right now I am walking history, and not me [name] but the things that I am doing. It’s walking history…And so there was somebody who did some things so that I could be here, I’m grateful for that. And I’m doing this so that I can give somebody opportunities. I want Black women to know that they’re okay. I want them to know that they have a voice, even if that voice is somebody they don’t know, there is somebody who is out there fighting for them to have a place in a society that says to them ‘you’re not okay,’ they need to know that yes I am.

Albeit the cultural expectations and inequities that Christy perceived throughout her experience, she acknowledged a value placed on education by those around her, and she admitted others pushed me:

Before I actually decided to apply to the doc program, I had been looking for a little while at the program, but it had been a while since I had actually been doing counseling full-time. I started back counseling and at the suggestion of several people around me, they said ‘[participant name] you really need to re-look at going into a doc program, you really need to thing about it.’

Once Christy was enrolled in doctoral studies she realized that education changed me. She discussed the personal growth that occurred throughout her educational attainment but dealt with feelings of selfishness, guilt, sacrifice, and questioning as she sought identity in the role of doctoral student. She stated:

This was going to be mine…my undergraduate, that was for my mom…my masters for my son…the doctorate was mine. I didn’t need it…I needed it but it wasn’t something that was needed for me to do well or to say ‘hey I made it’ it was none of that it was
purely selfish thing that I wanted for me that now that I had taken care of my son, I’m in this great job, I have this great boyfriend… so I can do this doctorate thing and still be okay and still be happy. That was my plan…this was my selfish move…I can do this and not feel as much guilt. I’m not home as much, I’m [university]. I’m commuting…that adds to the hours that I already have. So I’m an hour away, so that means even if I have to come for a fifteen minute meeting that’s two hours and fifteen minutes that’s gone…when [son] is home. That’s tough because he has sacrificed so much for me, and he is sacrificing for me so that’s kind of tough.

Whereas, Christy acknowledged the internal changes that resulted from her pursuit of higher education, she reported experiencing some uncertainty in her professional identity due to the inconsistency between her work and student roles. She discussed the challenges of finding myself in a new role:

Here’s the challenge for me. At my work site I am very competent, very confident, very capable…I mean I’m good as hell at my job. I would have had to have been to be where I am, in my role. Then I come to [university name] and I am questioning, and I am unsure, and I am being evaluated, and I have doubts, and I’m in this weird sandwich between master’s students and faculty, and I’m being questioned about a skill that I perform at work very proficiently and so it’s not fluid at all. Just today, this morning I’m in a room of 13 supervisees talking to them about their supervision and how to effectively work with their clients and giving them feedback and signing off on their paperwork in that role and then I come to [university] and I’m being told, the message I’m receiving is ‘there’s something about your supervision that needs to change’ and that is hard. I’m finally figuring out how to separate and integrate the two, because you can’t completely
separate them because you’re doing the same thing but you can’t integrate them because you’re doing two different things.

Christy connected her efforts to separate and or integrate her roles with constant prioritizing:

Even if I have all of these sort of hats, I’m putting one foot in front the other and go, okay here’s that e-mail that I have to send, all right here’s that paper that I have to correct, okay here is that time that I have to spend, okay here is that parent meeting that I have to go to, and knowing that something is not going to happen, something is going to crumble, it’s just a matter of nothing can crumble for too long. Something’s going to have to give. Somebody is not going to be happy. It’s just a matter of, okay who can I afford, and I hate to say this but it’s the truth, who or what can afford to be neglected right now. And that changes…it changes from one moment to the next.

When asked how constant prioritizing impacts her significant relationships, Christy stated that she knew she had to “fight for my relationships.” She stated:

My son is a student, so he gets that mommy is a student now. So there is that relational peace for us. In terms of my romantic relationship…There are those challenges because it becomes a matter of making certain decisions. Do I go and lay down next to my honey because I’ve not seen him for two weeks or, do I write this paper? And then ultimately deciding I’m going to lay down with my honey until he falls asleep and then I’m going to get up at three o’clock in the morning and write that paper.

She continued to describe her role balance experience and stated, “it is a lot to balance…it is, but all of them are so important.” Christy ultimately stated that key to her achieving balance is through faith and support systems. Christy shared her belief that she must have faith and trust that everything will come together as it has in the past. She shared her past
experience of becoming a mother which seemed to solidify her faith that things happen as they are supposed to. Christy stated:

I unexpectedly became a mom and that was a beautiful surprise...God did that...save my life. My kid saved my life. He did. He was given to me exactly as he was for a reason. Every single day is not a day that I'm not thankful...I know it sounds cheesy but it's true. I am so blessed; I am so blessed, so blessed.

As it relates to her support system, Christy went on to say:

Oh my gosh, that’s the good part, that’s the good stuff. The good stuff is having this support network that is so far reaching and it’s so wide that even when I crumble, I am falling on a bed of roses. My family, I have my mom and my siblings, particularly my sisters, I have [boyfriend’s name], I have a support of girlfriends...and then I have my best friend who I think...she really gets it. My colleagues at work and I have people here [University] in the program that are very supportive, one in particular [name of friend], and then [professor’s name] is really great about sort of getting it...[professor] doesn’t question, [professor] doesn’t probe, [professor] just sort of gets it and then [professor] just goes with it because [professor] just knows, without knowing, [professor] just kind of knows.

She continues:

Believe it or not, now that I think about it, in some ways [boyfriend’s name] does all of that. When I am having those moments of doubt, which are happening a whole lot more than I’m used to...he pushes me. He said to me...’there is no way I am going to let you quit, there is no way I am going to let you give up on this, this is too important to you.’

She ended by saying, “It is such a beautiful thing to have someone who you know that
they are struggling with this, I know that he is struggling with this, but he’s still like, keep going…you’re amazing…you’re great…you can do this.”

Summary of Christy’s Interview

The eight themes identified in this interview, as shown in Table 2, (responsibilities and expectations based on race, others pushed me, education changed me, finding myself in a new role, constant prioritizing, fight for my relationships, faith, support systems) provided insight into Christy’s perceived experience balancing education, work, and significant relationships. Christy identified four relationships as significant in her life (self, mom, extended family member, boyfriend) and was able to provide insight into her experience balancing multiple roles and relationships. Christy’s experience was deeply imbedded in her perceptions of cultural expectations and social norms for Black women. She was adamant that balancing multiple roles is not a new phenomenon for Black women and stated that juggling was something Black women have always had to do. Christy shared her belief that there are five keys to balancing education, work, and significant relationships: remember why you are choosing to do it all, intentionally connect with others, spirituality, awareness, and gratitude.

Amanda

Amanda is a 26-year-old Black female enrolled in her second year as a full-time doctoral student. She in enrolled in a non-traditional doctoral program that combines on-line virtual classrooms with in-person training. Amanda identified three relationships as significant in her life: boyfriend, parents, and grandmother. She reported that her perceived experience of balancing work, education, and school was significantly impacted by her familial relationships. She intertwined her perspective of familial responsibilities with her decisions of how and where to pursue work and education throughout the interview.
Emerging Categories and Themes

An interpretation of the interview transcripts with Amanda originally resulted in ten individual categories. The same process used with previous participants was utilized to analyze the data collected from Amanda. As a result of the IPA process, the categories were collapsed into six themes: validation and sense of belonging, self doubt, making sacrifices, differentiation, desire to connect, and faith.

Amanda’s focus was on her work roles because there is where she noticed the “biggest shift” upon adding the additional role of student to her life. Her decision to attend a doctoral program came on the heels of criticism from others that she believed was based on age and/or race. The criticism left her struggling for validation and sense of belonging. She stated:

A lot of my peers who are older than I who work with me at [place of employment] are like, ‘why are you going back for your PhD so soon?’ Kind of not happy about it I’ve noticed…but talking to some of my White coworkers…have a lot of questions and wondering why and that shift for me was weird because it’s kind of like feeling to defend the reason I’m going back…in some ways it makes me like, ‘What’s so wrong with that?’ She continued:

I’m the only Black woman in this program…and so I think different, in some ways that has nothing to do with race. Some of them (cohort peers)…have kids, some of them they don’t work. As a person of color…just having to even get them (cohort peers) to understand why I can’t respond to things the same way. They don’t always get that and then even when I share what I want my research interest to be and it’s like, ‘why do you want to study that?’ I’m like, ‘it’s important, it’s kind of about me.’ And they don’t always get that either.
Questions posed by others left Amanda feeling some self-doubt regarding her own abilities as related to obtaining the doctorate. Amanda shared her struggle through the application process to the university she currently attends. She remembered experiencing doubt at each level of the application process. She remembers:

I don’t know if I get in, I get in. If I don’t, I don’t care…I got called for an interview…at that point I was like, Ok year, I got an interview but I doubt it…I went through the interview process…They called back and they were like, ‘we want you in this cohort’, and I was stunned. I was just very shocked but excited.

Amanda connected her struggle for validation and sense of belonging to a different struggle of ensuring differentiation between herself and stereotypical roles of Black women. Amanda spent a lot of time discussing how she has to defend her culture to her peers, which reinforces her need to represent her perception of the Black community. She recalls moments when her peers make culturally insensitive statements and thinking, “I’m not the exception of what the African American experience is like.” She explained, “I don’t have to be the exception, I’m maybe a representative to you because you don’t see many other faces in this classroom that looks like mine.” Amanda continued to explore her fury at the “playfulness” of a Black male peer in her program. “I think that our viewpoints on the seriousness of being in this program and what we do represents our classmates are very different.”

Although Amanda worked to differentiate herself from stereotypes, she acknowledged that she felt a desire to connect with others within her in her educational program, to no avail. She stated:

I’m the only black woman in this program. How is this going to be when I need someone…when a teacher says a comment that I don’t think is appropriate? Who do I
process that with that's in my program? And just having to even get them to understand why I can't even respond to things the same way that they can. If I don't like a treatment or a grade… I can't be the hostile one that goes crazy like they do sometimes and get really upset. I'm like, 'I can't do that, I'm sorry.' I'll write them a nice e-mail and tell them about how I'm not pleased with my grade and what can I do to maybe get it rectified.

They don't always get that and then even when I share what I want my research interest to be…it's like, 'why do you want to study that?' I'm like, 'it's important. It's kind of about me', and they don't always get that either. So just in having to have these discussions centered around that and to really find times where I choose to be vulnerable and share to my classmates, 'as a person of color, this is how I feel or this is what I think is really going on.' I feel sometimes it's somewhat dismissed or just like, 'Well you're the exception. You're a doc student. You're African American. You're probably from a well-to-do family', which is not true.

When asked how she deals with the demands of a doctoral program Amanda focused on the sacrifices that she felt were inherent in pursuing doctoral studies. She stated, “I knew a doctoral program was not going to be easy. There was going to be a lot of sacrifices.” At that point Amanda began to consider the changes that needed to occur in her life to accommodate the added role of doctoral student. According to Amanda, this moment was the beginning of making many sacrifices. She shared:

I think I was really concerned because I was like, ‘I work full-time, I don’t want to be in school forever. I talked with my boss about it, she’s a woman of color, so maybe that was a benefit. I just told her that maybe two days out of the week, I’m going to have to leave…I was willing to be flexible to not jeopardize my job in order to have this
opportunity to pursue a Ph.D. My role balance and me having to manage time while I’m in the office is much better because now I don’t have the freedom to say, ‘oh I’ll just work on that when I get home’ because I have a paper to do or I have class.

She continued:

Having to shift in that way that way where I’m not as available to other people across [work] who have supported me through my program and through the initiatives that we’ve started.

Regarding her relationships, she stated:

I’ve talked to my family and my boyfriend about it, and for these next two, three, maybe four years, I may not make all of the family gatherings, or I may not be able to drop everything and come to [home town] because it’s [holiday] or whatever. Also, I’m dating someone. I know my boyfriend gets frustrated, where I’m like, ‘we can’t go anywhere this weekend, I have things to do I just need you to understand.’ We try to joke and make light of it…but that doesn’t mean that we haven’t had those moments where he gets frustrated, or I get frustrated that I haven’t seen you in a week. We feel disconnected. Even hanging out with other…friends that are couples and having them to understand too that we can’t do happy hour this week, because it’s just not going to happen.

She continued discussing her perceived sacrifices:

Then probably the easiest one, and maybe I went from more difficult to easiest in work and then romantic and then family. My mom…she gets it. So when I’m telling her, ‘mom I know it’s Thanksgiving break, I cannot come until Thanksgiving night to do things, or I’m not coming until Christmas day,’ and things like that, she’s always understanding and has been really supportive of that. For me, that makes me more
willing with all of my family, with my relationship with my boyfriend, to make sure then with all those other times when I have that spare time or that I make that extra sacrifices. So I make sure if it’s my mother’s birthday, that I am in [city] with her. Doesn’t matter what day it is. I’ll take off from work to make sure that she still understands that I appreciate her in my life.

Amanda continued to discuss strategies that she incorporates to assist her in balancing roles and sacrifices that she make. During her reflections about her role balance experience, the power of faith was stated again as a source of strength; however, faith was intertwined in other parts of the interview. Faith was discussed during Amanda’s narratives regarding her upbringing, education, and as a factor in choosing where to pursue doctoral studies. Amanda stated about her program:

This might be good and it's a Christian school so that also helped that… I've always gone to public schools for my higher education degrees but ironically… I always have gone to Catholic schools. So, it was like, maybe that's what I needed too, is that faith, peace and having people around me who were supportive of what I was going through but also knowing these people will be with me praying for me throughout this process. I'll be doing that for them.

Summary of Amanda’s Interview

The six themes identified in this interview, as shown in Table 2, (validation and sense of belonging, self doubt, making sacrifices, differentiation, desire to connect, faith) provided insight into Amanda’s perceived experience balancing education, work, and significant relationships. Amanda identified three relationships as significant in her life (boyfriend, parent, and grandmother) and was able to provide insight into her experience balancing multiple roles and
relationships. Amanda’s experience was heavily impacted by her role as an employee. She verbalized seeing the biggest shift in her role at work and struggling to most with keeping that role afloat. Amanda shared her belief that there are three keys to balancing education, work, and significant relationships: prioritizing, keeping God first, and self-care.

**Vera Firefly**

Vera Firefly is a 38-year-old Black female enrolled in her fifth year of doctoral studies. She identified three relationships as significant in her life: children, husband, and self. She described her perceived experience balancing work, education, and significant relationships as “difficult to achieve.” Vera Firefly described how her work and educational roles are drastically impacted by her significant relationships as she reported her role of mother as dominant over any other. She spoke at length about how much “more balanced” her life was before she decided to return to school.

**Emerging Themes**

An interpretation of the transcripts of the interview with Vera Firefly originally resulted in 10 categories that emerged from the coded data. The same process used with the previous participants was utilized to analyze the data collected from Vera Firefly. As a result of the IPA process, the categories were collapsed into seven themes: change in homeostasis, personal relationships suffered, consideration of the self, fighting against racial stereotypes, role compromise, constant prioritizing, and mindfulness.

Vera Firefly began the interview by discussing the structure maintained in her life prior to and at the beginning doctoral studies. She stated, “It was more balanced than, I think, compared to now and that was mostly because when I started school I had this consistent routine…So first
it was not that difficult to have the desire to keep it up.” Vera Firefly that she noticed added responsibilities in her life, which she attributes to the change in homeostasis:

They were shifted and they were, well, not really shifted, it’s just that I had more of them. In addition to everything that I shared with you that I did previously, then I would also have to think about a paper that I needed to write or supervision and being prepared for supervision and then having supervision too. It added to the responsibilities and so what I tried to do as best as I could was, because I am committed to being home with my kids when they’re at a very young age, I know that my, what sacrifice looks like for me is probably would be a lot different from other people.

Vera Firefly revealed that changes in homeostasis led to personal relationships suffered. She stated:

It added more stress to my husband’s and I relationship because we already had a lot with just us being a newish family. On the weekends would be family dance so I would have to take the Sunday for study, or if I would be late one evening, wake up in the morning, be very tired, not as contributing as I could be. So I would say that things kind of changed a little bit to the degree where we both had to kind of, we had to adjust to it, a different way of being. We didn’t have a lot time together. The babies were always taken care of but we weren’t always together when we could be because I had school.

She continued:

And…I was less available to continue the connections that I had with friends. No matter what the goal was, whether it was taking care of myself…cultivating relationships with friends…it was just less time.”

She provided this example:
We had committed to having guests during [holiday]…and I really wasn’t as available to them unfortunately and I struggled with that after the fact because I like that couple. But I couldn’t really spend time with them…so that was a bit much.

She also spoke about her relationship with her mother, stating that “not having a lot of time together because of all the extra responsibilities” puts strain on that relationship as well.

Vera Firefly discussed two struggles that she encountered while dealing with changes in her normal way of life. She revealed that there were struggles in *consideration of self* when decisions were made in the best interest of her kids even if they were to the detriment of self. She stated:

So there would nights when I’d have to be up really late or I would take all of Sunday and post up at a coffee shop. I would do that when I had to because we had family time in the weekends. I didn’t sacrifice time with my kids.

Vera Firefly then went on to discuss one of the more personal struggles that she encounter as a Black female in higher education. She shared insight into her educational background and acknowledged that being the minority in an academic setting left her pondering the impacts of social conditioning on the majority culture. She discussed how she was *fighting against racial stereotypes*. She explained:

I think that there’s something to be said about being the only person of color in the room all the time. I grew up, my elementary school was 99.9% Black. High school, it was 60/40, so we had a good bit of Black people, good bit of White people and so that was the first experience I had with people from different cultures in an academic setting. I think that, maybe the expectations are, I don’t know if I would call them expectations as far as what I felt, but in looking at generally social conditioning and the way that we all develop
as a result of it. So I’m looking at the individuals from the majority group culture in a group with them and thinking of them as products of their environment, products of social conditioning, and knowing that there’s a high likelihood that there will be some stereotypes. Acknowledged, not acknowledged, maybe there aren’t any stereotypes but I would venture to say that because of social conditioning, there probably are. From the perspective, the one stereotype being Black people aren’t smart, Black people are cut to do certain things or whatever. So I think that was an underlying thing that I had to making sure I was always on top of my stuff, on my A game.

She continued:

Initially it was probably a little anxiety provoking for me but that was in the beginning…but by the third year just the level of confidence that I had…I think has been a growth experience for me.

As a result of the expanded roles in her life she discussed how she had to revisit old roles and make compromises to fit into her new lifestyle. For example, Vera Firefly stated that there have been role compromises made in her household in an effort to maintain a level of normalcy for the kids. She shared beliefs that her husband whom she refers to as “an academic” had a desire to pursue doctoral studies but she stated, “there was no way that both of us could do it at the same time.” Therefore, she pursued the advanced degree and noticed some resentment as a result. She stated, “I think that was difficult for him and I think there was some underlying resentment. Not really like just out there that pervaded all of our interactions but it was there.” In addition, Vera Firefly shared that they maintain a nontraditional household as it relates to primary caretaker and domestic roles.
Throughout the interview with Vera Firefly two ideas were present as multiple points and were reiterated again as “secret” to her role balance: constant prioritizing and mindfulness. In regarding to her constant prioritizing, she stated:

A lot of prioritizing…less time and more prioritizing to be able to make the things happen that were really important to me. I would be able to work sometimes when [kid] would take a nap. I also had to prioritize my exercise, sometimes I would go first thing in the morning, sometimes I would go after nap or before the nap. I can’t negotiate when I’m going to do laundry…it’s got to be done.

As it related to mindfulness, she explained:

A big, big thing that helped was, and I have to remind myself of this now, remembering to be in the moment. Because whatever we’re doing, whether it’s working or going to school, a lot of people it’s natural, I think, to be mindful of what direction you’re headed. And a lot of what we do is contributing to where we see ourselves going.

Summary of Vera Firefly’s Interview

The seven themes identified in this interview, as shown in Table 2, (change in homeostasis, personal relationships suffered, consideration of the self, fighting against racial stereotypes, role compromise, constant prioritizing, mindfulness) provided insight into Vera Firefly’s perceived experience balancing education, work, and significant relationships. Vera Firefly identified three relationships as significant in her life (parent, wife, and self) and was able to provide insight into her experience balancing multiple roles and relationships. Vera Firefly’s experience was heavily impacted by her role as a mother. Each experience Vera Firefly shared was intertwined with her role and responsibilities as a mother. Vera Firefly shared her belief that there is one key to balancing education, work, and significant relationships: grit.
Africa

Africa is a 29-year-old Black female enrolled in her second year as a full-time doctoral student. She is enrolled in a non-traditional doctoral program that combines online virtual classrooms with in-person training. Africa identified two relationships as significant in her life: family and spirituality. She intertwined her historical perspective on education for Black women with her perceived role balance experience.

Emerging Themes

An interpretation of the interview transcripts with Africa originally resulted in 15 individual categories. The same process used with previous participants was utilized to analyze the data collected from Africa. As a result of the IPA process, the categories were collapsed into six themes: responsibilities and expectations based on race, perseverance to achieve goals, motivation, the education effect, internal metamorphosis, and support systems.

The primary focus of Africa’s role balance experience was her perceived responsibilities and expectations based on race. She stated a belief that, as an African-American woman, she is unable to create success for herself without members of the majority culture. She stated:

This goes back to just the root of everything. I believe that, as a person of color, I know more specifically of African-American color or Black color, I can’t make it in this world, especially in the PhD program…any of the stuff I’m trying to do with my book, with my business, with my practice, with my PhD, whatever, without meeting White people to some degree. That requires an acceptance and understanding and in a sense an assimilation to some degree of a culture that’s completely different to your own. I think that’s very different because White people don’t need us.

She continued on the issue of how race and gender intersect in her life:
I think my issues my issues is [sic] been primarily gender but I think it (race) does affect it. Because for one, the need to be responsible for my race and my gender. I feel like if I mess up, if I do something that I’m not supposed to do it’s not that ‘[name] messed up’ or ‘[name] made a bad choice.’ ‘Look at those Black girls, you can’t give them nothing, you see how they act when you give them a little bit of something.’ I feel the burden of lifting everyone. I just really believe that I have to do this. I’m doing it for myself. I’m doing it for my future children. I’m doing it for Black women who feel like they can’t. Black women who have been told that they won’t be successful, they could never do these things. Black people who just need to see somebody positive…in this role. I feel like I have a responsibility to do it.

As Africa continued to discuss her perceived burden to uplift, she felt that the burden was also the impetus for her perseverance to achieve goals. She stated, “I don’t think I would have ever been satisfied if I just would have stayed at the Master’s level.” She continued:

That’s what prompted me to go back to get my PhD. In fact, when I was in school at the master’s level, that’s when I began applying. I was just devastated that I didn’t get in. I think that gave me an even greater determination to continue. I mean I will just say that I just saw myself doing whatever I needed to do.

In addition, she linked her perseverance to achieve goals with the factor of motivation she maintains to accomplish her goals. She continued:

My entire family is very competitive and I do mean that literally. There is this internal need to make sure that you can keep up and that you’re not going to be the one that didn’t do it or inadequate. I say there’s some external pressure and also some internal pressure of feeling like, I need to have as much credentials and as much positive things about
me…let’s say…if I need to get a job and I’m competing against a master’s level person. I want to be the person that they choose because I have the more education, stuff like that. There’s an external but then also an internal motivator for you just as wanting to be the best, it seems, in whatever it is you choose to do.

Africa recalled that once she began her doctoral studies as a newly married woman, changes were made in her life to accommodate the new roles. She discussed how school “bleeds” into her marriage and her work life. She stated that sacrifices were made to combat the education effect that she was experiencing. Africa recognized the costs associated with balancing multiple roles and stated that things became more difficult once she enrolled in doctoral studies:

I actually was working a lot more before I got married. It was almost like a light switch went off. I realized that I never wanted to be the type of person who would just work at all costs, at the expense of everything. I was working really long, late hours. I felt like, for a marriage that’s just starting, that’s not good.

Africa reflected on her decision to quit her job to create some balance in her life. She realized that she would also need to change to accommodate her changing roles. She described her internal metamorphosis as the answer to the effects of education in her life:

My life changed entirely. My life is changing. The brain cells that it requires to do scholarly work, is just completely different. I was under the impression that I was doing a good job of using my brain cells. Then I feel like I got smacked in the face with the PhD program. It was just very different. The requirements, expectations, the way that you’re supposed to think. I think there’s a language. The expectations of me academically have increased.
Africa stated that she met the new demands associated with her student role by mainly learning how to socialize and express herself when addressing culturally sensitive issues. “I’ve evolved a lot over the years. I’ve had to realize…you have to be careful…you have to be very mature about how you say it because it can be very easily misconstrued, definitely.”

Africa concluded her interview by reiterating the main ingredient to her role balance experience, support systems. She intertwined the support she feels from her spirituality and her family, stating clearly the order of importance in her life and the principle that governs her beliefs:

I give you my hierarchy. God is first… according to the principle in the bible God is first…followed by my husband…I would say that my relationship with God would be more important than the relationship with my husband, but my husband would be the second most important…followed by…my nuclear family. We don’t have children yet so it will still be my mom, her husband, and my siblings. My PhD and my career, [I] kind of put them side-by-side. It’s hard for me to put one over the other. I try to remember where my balance lies and just really remembering that I believe I am gifted. When things get tough I remind myself of the scripture where God says, ‘To whom much is given, much is expected.’

She specifically addressed support received from her husband. She stated, “I’m fortunate that my husband is the most patient, understanding person that could be for me…he certainly pushed me and motivates me…he’s constantly looking out for my best interest.”

**Summary of Africa’s Interview**

The six themes identified in this interview, as shown in Table 2, (responsibilities and expectations based on race, perseverance to achieve goals, motivation, the education effect,
internal metamorphosis, and support systems) provided insight into Africa’s perceived experience of balancing education, work, and significant relationships. Africa identified two relationships as significant in her life: God (spirituality) and family. The expectations she perceived from her culture and her family members are woven throughout the experience that she shared through the interview. She believed that her path is “God’s design” and that her family supports her to overcome the obstacles that may stand in her way. Overall, Africa believed that she has maintained balance in her life by keeping God first and having a clear vision of her goals. She believes that God and a vision are the two keys to her maintaining balance in her role balance experience.

**Cross-case Analysis of Participants’ Themes**

Adhering to the IPA process, I completed each of the individual case analyses prior to attempting a cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis (sixth) step of IPA maintains that patterns across cases should be identified and synthesized into super-ordinate themes to represent shared concepts of the cases (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Staying true to the IPA recommended procedure for cross-case analysis, I analyzed each case as an individual entity before attempting to cluster themes into super-ordinate themes. I believed that this method of analysis would minimize the potential for researcher bias and lend more accuracy to the participants’ perceptions of their experience balancing education, work, and significant relationships. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) recommended moving to a “more theoretical level as one recognizes, for example, that themes or super-ordinate themes which are particular to individual cases also represent instances of higher order concepts which the cases therefore share” (p. 101). In keeping with the IPA process, super-ordinate themes were created, based not only on the importance to the individual interviewee but also based on the role the individual
interview would play in illuminating themes from other participant interviews. Using cross-case analysis, I viewed themes as a collective group and grouped related themes using subtext and explanations provided by participants.

For the five participants on table three the cross-case analysis of themes produced a total of 11 themes. Giselle’s transcript included 4 of the 11 themes, Christy’s transcript included 6 of the 11 themes, Amanda’s transcript included 5 of the 11 themes, Vera Firefly’s transcript included 5 of the 11 themes, and Africa’s transcript included 5 of the 11 themes. Across the 11 themes, two participants’ transcripts included the theme of getting to my goal, five included sacrifice, four included influence of race, three included support, two included mind-body connection, two included searching to belong, one included life change, two included spirituality, two included spirituality, one included doubts, five included a new me emerged, and six included juggling life. The cross-case analysis of the five participants is shown in Table 3. Thirty-three emerging themes were collapsed into eleven. Table 3 reflects how each emerging theme was collapsed and in parentheses the number of times the theme was present for the individual.
Table 3. *Cross-Case Analysis of Five Participants: List of 11 Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Names</th>
<th>Theme Total</th>
<th>Giselle (4)</th>
<th>Christy (5)</th>
<th>Amanda (5)</th>
<th>Vera Firefly (5)</th>
<th>Africa (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting to my goal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Race</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES (2)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind-body connection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES (2)</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching to belong</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES (2)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new me emerged</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES(2)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juggling life</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>YES(3)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Super-Ordinate Themes**

I compared each theme with all 11 themes and clustered similar themes into super-ordinate themes. The overarching theme that encompasses all 11 remaining themes is the role balance experience. Three super-ordinate themes were created: *past influences present, struggle to have it all, and how to balance*. The super-ordinate theme of *past influences present* included getting to my goal, influence of race, and a new me emerged. The second super-ordinate theme...
of struggle to have it all included sacrifice, searching to belong, life change, and doubts. The third super-ordinate of how to balance included support, mind-body connection, spirituality, and juggling life (see Figure 2.)
Figure 2. *Themes Clustered into Super-ordinate Themes.*

Role Balance Experience of Black Female Counselor Education Doctoral Students
Maintaining Full-time Employment and Significant Relationships

Role Balance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past Influences Present</th>
<th>Struggle to Have it All</th>
<th>How to Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting to my goal</td>
<td>Influence of Race</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Me Emerged</td>
<td>Searching to Belong</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mind Body Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Juggling Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doubts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As an additional analysis measure, the list of initial themes was compiled and grouped into the three super-ordinate categories to determine if the super-ordinate umbrella would cover all themes that arouse during the data collection and analysis process. Themes were listed and organized based on super-ordinate themes as shown in Figure 3.
Figure 3. *Cross-Case Analysis of Five Participants.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My background doesn’t define me</th>
<th>Fighting for relationships</th>
<th>Support systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting the bar</td>
<td>Constant internal battle</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities and expectations based on race</td>
<td>Prioritizing</td>
<td>Others pushed me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities and expectations based on race</td>
<td>Personal relationships were impacted</td>
<td>Self doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting against racial stereotypes</td>
<td>Making it work</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding myself in a new role</td>
<td>Making sacrifices</td>
<td>Support systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education changed me</td>
<td>Personal relationships suffered</td>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant prioritizing</td>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance to achieve goals</td>
<td>Constant prioritizing</td>
<td>Consideration of the self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role compromise</td>
<td>Change in homeostasis</td>
<td>Validation and sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The education effect</td>
<td>Internal metamorphosis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Past Influences Present | Struggle to Have It All | How To Balance |
Super-Ordinate Theme 1: Past Influences Present

The super-ordinate theme of *past influences present* emerged from the historical lens that all five participants shared as Black women. Participants addressed the historical paradigm that influences their experiences and perceptions when attempting to make sense of the world as it is experienced. The five participants in this study reported that they work hard to break stereotypes. Specifically, all participants stated a need to be source of pride for their culture and community. Christy, in regard to the past experiences she witnessed that created expectations for her, she stated: “We didn’t have to fight for this. This was something that we have been doing from early when Mammy was in the kitchen and raising children…this was not something we had to fight for.” She continued by describing a media example that reinforced her perception of influences from the past:

There was this TV show called ‘Julia.’ It was a nurse…Diane Carroll was the main character and she was the first African American female main character of a show. And guess what she was? A single mom was working full-time. We’ve always had to balance multiple roles. It’s wasn’t a question of how am I going to do this, you had to do it.

Africa focused on influences dating back to the times of slavery and what those influences mean for Black women pursuing a post-graduate education and working to obtain career success. Africa stated:

I just want to speak a little bit about maybe what I have perceived to be kind of characteristic of Black women in general, which speaks to years ago in slavery where we have had to just take leadership roles…We still had to be good mothers and good wives and know how to work that field and do whatever we needed to do to take care of our home and take care of our loved ones. I think that speaks a lot to even where we are now,
generations later. Still doing so much and balancing so many roles. When I think of some of my struggles…then I go back to…Sojourner Truth…Harriet Tubman…and all the examples of strong Black women before me that have accomplished so much. It’s still like…you know what, they did it. They did it under those circumstances; certainly I can do it today.

Christy emphasized the belief that she must be an influence to Black women in the future. She stated:

I know that I am…standing on the shoulders of giants and preparing to become a giant myself. I know that what I’m doing is big and that it has the potential to influence so many other people. I know that I am in a way a part of walking history…not me [name] but walking history. There was somebody who did some things so that I could be here. I am doing this so that I can give somebody opportunities.

Amanda and Vera Firefly focused on what they perceive others believe about them as Black women. Both shared beliefs that because of their race, there was a need to prove to others that they deserved to be in a doctoral program and could handle the rigor of doctoral studies. Vera Firefly stated that others thought, “Black people aren’t cut to do certain things.” Amanda felt that others wondered, “why we’re sitting here.” As a result of those thoughts, Vera Firefly stated, “that was an underlying thing that I had making sure I was always on top of my stuff.”

Giselle’s perceived experience with the past impacting her present day life related more to her personal familial experience. Giselle reported that she is a first generation college student and the first in her family to achieve doctoral education. She believes that with no precedent in her familial history, she holds the responsibility to “set the bar” for other Black women:
Coming from the background where neither one of my parents have experienced college…it’s like figuring all of this out on my own. I feel that there is more responsibility on me to set the bar for my siblings, and my cousins, and my godchildren, whose parents did not go to college. So I realize that I’m almost bearing the weight of the culture on my shoulders and saying, ‘hey I have to set the bar because there’s not a lot of me, there’s not a lot of it.’

Super-Ordinate Theme 2: Struggle to Have it All

The super-ordinate theme of *struggle to have it all* emerged from the lenses of Black women who were attempting to balance multiple roles. This particular theme encompasses the participant experiences regarding the struggles incurred while engaging in the roles of education, work, and significant relationships. Participants shared experiences ranging from the need to have it all, the struggle to have it all, and the benefit of working for it all. Africa shared what she believes about Black women and the fight to have it all:

One thing I think…unfortunately, women in general, but especially women of color and African American women specifically. I think, we think that you have to have either/or in the sense that you might have a good career in education but you cannot be married with children. Or you might be married with children but then that means you’re going to sacrifice your career and education. I don’t believe that is true. I believe that you can have both.

Christy stated, regarding how education, work, and significant relationships meshed in her life, that she waited until her career and relationships seemed stable to apply to doctoral programs. She recognized that there was no fluidity within the three roles of education, work, and
significant relationships. In fact, she commented on how complicated her life has become during the transitions from one role to the next. She stated:

I was working full-time…I have a son…I have a relationship…it was fairly new, we’d only been dating a few months at that time. And so when that looked as though it was working out I said ‘you know what, yeah, I’m going to apply.’ Then I applied and got in…my situation changed dramatically.

Christy continued to discuss the changes in her life. She had been promoted at work, she had scheduled a full-time class load, and she worked to fit in time with her kid and her boyfriend. When asked about the implications balancing multiple roles on her life, she simply stated, “it’s been chaotic ever since.”

Amanda focused on the sacrifices of trying to have it all. She stated that she anticipated having to struggle and make concessions in her life even before she applied to doctoral studies. Amanda knew that she was already balancing work roles with her familial roles but she stated, “I knew a doctoral program was not going to be easy…there was going to be a lot of sacrifices.” Vera Firefly echoed Amanda’s concern by sharing what her life was like before adding the student role to her roles at home and at work. “It was more balanced compared to now, and it was mostly because before I started school I’d had this consistent routine.” When asked about how her life changed once she added the student role, she stated, “logistically it did become more difficult…I didn’t sacrifice time with my kids…for me it was business and rest.” Similar to Vera Firefly’s selective sacrificing experience, Giselle acknowledged several sacrifices that she made during her struggle to have it all, such as time with family and her extracurricular activities, but was adamant that there were certain things that she was unwilling to sacrifice such as her commitments to God. “I’m not willing to jeopardize my relationship with Him,” she reiterated.
Giselle also reflected a sense of personal gain through the struggles and sacrifices of trying to balance education, work, and significant relationships. “It’s a lot juggling all these relationship, roles…but at the same time it’s rewarding,” she stated. She discussed feeling more confident and proud as a result of her pursuit of it all. Likewise, Africa briefly discussed sacrifices and the adjustments she made in her life as a result of adding the role of doctoral student to her work and familial roles. She stated that the added role of student created a struggle in her life before she had even begun coursework. “I went on my honeymoon…and while I was there I was literally coming up with my personal statement, getting my paperwork together,” she recalled. She shared other sacrifices she made in her relationships as well as in her career. For example, she reduced time spent with her family and changed jobs to reduce work hours. However, Africa stated that being a doctoral student gave her the courage to make the changes necessary to accomplish her goal of “having it all.”

**Super-Ordinate Theme 3: How to Balance**

The super-ordinate theme of how to balance encompassed how each participant perceived her role balance experience and the resources that make role balance possible. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to share how they balance. Participants responded from three different angles: how they are currently balancing, what resources help them balance, and what advice they have for others to balance. All participants acknowledged that the “secrets” to balancing were simply prioritizing and negotiation. Africa believed that her balance was achieved through constantly negotiating roles. Giselle used the word “juggling” to describe how she balances and Vera Firefly used the term “grit” to describe her balance experience. She explained:
…having grit and doing what you’ve got to do and just hanging in there with your business. Just making sure that you don’t let things get so far out of control that you aren’t able to pick up the pieces and reel it back in or kind of keep it going.

Christy stated, “I have no idea. I push through. I’m putting one foot in front of the other one…it’s just the matter of… who or what can I afford to be neglected right now and that changes from one moment to the next.”

In discussing resources, all participants believed that one or more of their significant relationships provided motivation. For example, Christy’s resources included an “amazing amount of support” from friends, colleagues, peers, a professor in her program, her boyfriend, and her spiritual belief. In fact, all five participants expressed a shared belief in a higher power as source of strength. Spirituality was a primary significant relationship for Africa and Giselle. Both shared the belief that putting God as the center of their struggles gives them strength to overcome challenges. Africa stated, “I believe in God’s design.” Giselle shared:

A lot of the strength comes from my spiritual relationship and believing that there's nothing that I can't accomplish without God, and I got Him. So, just knowing that gives me the ability to keep pushing forward, and balancing it-- all of this. And that's where a lot of my peace and my sanity comes in because I feel like if I didn't have that, I would be burned out. I would be complaining. I would be aggravated and upset. But because I rely on Him so much I still can be at peace and be able to juggle these things.

In discussing advice for future cohorts of Black women, Vera Firefly wanted to encourage women to take on the doctoral degree either before having children or after raising them, based on her struggles managing a family while working and pursuing educational endeavors.
Christy and Amanda focused on being in the right mental space before adding the role of student to roles already assumed. Both wanted to make sure that women, before entering a doctoral program and adding the role of student, evaluate and be clear on for what reason they are seeking a doctoral degree. Christy stressed:

Not to lose sight of why you are choosing to do it all. So when you have to make those tough decisions, you’re very clear about the reasons why you’re making those tough decisions. Don’t be this self sacrificing sacrificial lamb who’s doing it just for the sake of doing it, don’t do that, I choose to do it all because…those two men who are in my life. I mean…the school it is selfish, it’s for me, I don’t have to do this. This is something that I want to do for [name], for me. In all of those roles, guess what, I’m the common denominator. So because I’m the common denominator, if I am not doing this for me…then I’m doing everything for everybody else and that’s something I won’t do.

Similarly, Amanda wanted other Black women to be clear that they should be “definitely doing it for you” but then “just get in there and do it.” Amanda continued, “having the mentors, having the self-care, having the idea of what legacy you’re trying to leave behind with this dissertation” was added advice to help prevent Black women from failing to complete their doctoral programs. She explained:

Just having an idea of what you want to be interested in so that…when you’re meeting those professionals and those other professors, you already have a sense of like, ‘well this is who I need to connect with’ or ‘this is who I need to ask about my topic that I’m thinking of” because they might have some insight. It just makes it easier for you. It gives you less chances of giving up and quitting when you feel like you have these people who at least understand where you’re coming from and who get it.
She continued:

That’s the thing, we get in and then sometimes we give up because we have all these other roles as women, we’re expected to have and it makes it harder to try to put school at the forefront of that when you have a family or when you have a significant other.

Figuring out how to best balance it makes it much, much easier.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, an extensive description of the themes that derived from the individual interviews of the research participants was presented. A cross-case analysis of participant responses was conducted and the original themes were collapsed into three super-ordinate themes: past influences present, struggle to have it all, and how to balance. The overarching viewpoint of role balance and the super-ordinate themes were applied to the lenses and questions of this research study.
Chapter Five

Discussion

In this chapter, the purpose of the study is reiterated and a summary of the results is provided. Findings of this study are reviewed and presented in relation to previous research. The limitations of this study and implications for counselor educators programs and counselor education doctoral students are provided. Recommendations for future research are presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a personal reflection.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to increase awareness of the role balance experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships. A review of the literature revealed little research on this specific topic. Specifically, the goal of the study was to explore the role balance experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students at the intersection of work and significant relationships. Utilizing a systems perspective, the focus was to understand the essence of the role balance experience and in what ways the individual roles have an impact on each other.

My conceptual framework was rooted in systems theory. The main concept guiding systems theory states that an experience, negative or positive, had by one member of a system or family will influence the entire system, as no one member operates singularly (Walsh, 2003). Thus, the system in this study is the entire role balance experience, whereas the individual “members” of the experience would be the student experience, work experience, and significant relationship experience.
The primary research question for this study was: What is the role balancing experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students who are maintaining significant relationships and full-time employment? Sub-questions were:

(a) What do participants consider to be significant relationships in their lives?
(b) What roles do the participants feel are most pertinent to their role balance experience?
(c) How do the roles influence one another?

The data were explored through a systems lens.

**Summary of Methods and Procedures**

I utilized an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to explore the lived experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships. A small purposeful sample was utilized; criteria for participation included race, sex, educational enrollment, and weekly hours worked. I interviewed five participants, each of whom identified as a Black female, was currently enrolled in doctoral studies, was currently working full-time as defined by 30 or more hours per week, and verbalized having one or more significant relationships.

I utilized purposeful sampling for participant recruitment. Initially, e-mails were sent to department chairs at five CACREP-accredited universities within a 400-mile radius of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, that have a counselor education doctoral program. Following this initial recruitment initiative, a second invitation to participate was sent to all CACREP-accredited universities listed on the CACREP website. Once participants were identified, interviews were conducted both in person and via Facetime. Interviews were then transcribed through a third party transcription company. The length of initial interviews varied from 35 minutes to 90 minutes. After the interviews were transcribed, initial themes were pulled from the transcripts.
through the IPA analysis process. Initial themes and the transcript were sent to each participant for member checking and a follow up interview was scheduled.

During the follow up interview, participants were asked to share any concerns regarding the transcript or the initial analysis of themes. All participants agreed with the initial analysis and no requests for changes or clarification were made. After participants validated the initial theme analysis, themes were clustered and grouped across cases into super-ordinate themes and used to answer the main research question. The cross-case analysis produced a total of 11 themes that were then grouped into three super-ordinate themes: past influences present, struggle to have it all, and how to balance.

**Discussion of Results**

The 11 themes derived from the data that emerged from individual participant experiences, when combined, produced a total of three super-ordinate themes. The first super-ordinate theme of *past influences present* included three of the 11 themes: influence of race, getting to my goal, a “new me” emerged. The label *past influences present* refers to the participants’ feelings of responsibility due to the precedent set by Black women in history. Race emerged as a theme for four of the participants, specifically in terms of how race influences their experience by defining expectations and responsibilities based on a historical view of the Black woman. The theme of getting to my goal was essential for two participants, who linked their determination to accomplish goals with the influence of race. Four participants noted negative stereotypes that they felt responsible for breaking and two participants specifically shared the belief that the entire race would be uplifted through their personal achievement. The last theme for the first super-ordinate theme was a “new me” emerged. Four participants shared obstacles,
some self-imposed and some societal and/or family-imposed, but they also shared how those obstacles created a paradigm shift in their lives.

The second super-ordinate theme, *struggle to have it all*, included four of the 11 themes: sacrifice, life change, searching to belong, and doubts. All of the participants experienced some type of sacrifice while attempting to meet the demands of education, work, and family. Conflict manifested in four of the participants’ experience under the theme of sacrifice. Participants acknowledged that they were fighting to maintain relationships while also engaging in work and educational responsibilities, which sometimes created discord internally and/or externally. For example, Vera Firefly shared a situation where she was unable to spend time with friends from out of town because she had to work on a school assignment over the weekend. This led her to feelings of guilt and created tension with her husband due to her lack of involvement. Giselle noted that she physically attends weekly family gatherings but she is disconnected mentally by doing schoolwork on her computer during the gatherings.

Sacrifice emerged in that personal relationships with others and self suffered. Two participants specifically verbalized that they had been able to maintain significant relationships throughout their role balance experience but admitted that they did so to the detriment of self-care. It is important to note that all participants discussed sacrifice but the sacrifices made were situation-specific and unique to each participant. For one participant, sacrifice was a direct result of the life change that was experienced at the intersection of education, work, and significant relationships. For example, Christy stated:

That growth and that development that I knew was going to happen is now, it's still happening but now it's surrounded by chaos and balancing even more roles and fighting for my relationship and/or making sure that he's okay, because I am much more busy than
we anticipated. And being tired, stressed out and having that impact my relationships
with my son and this guy who I'm absolutely in love with, and who I know now I want to
have a future with…who is a part of my plan and trying to balance that and it is hard. It's
really, really, really hard. Yeah, it's tough.

She continued:

So, I'm going to get up on Saturday in the morning, probably after making love to my
partner at 1 o'clock in the morning, I'm going to get up at 5:30 in the morning, and I'm
going to have my me time, and then I'm going to get my kid up, and get him ready for
school, and I'm going to get ready for work. And I'm going to drive to work. And then,
I'll leave work and I'm going to come on campus. I'm going to be in class and I'm going
to be expected to be as present as that person who woke up at nine o'clock and went to
Whole Foods, went home, and dallied around, got in our care, and came to campus.

In response to experiencing conflict within personal relationships, Amanda sought
connection with other Black women in the academy. Amanda focused heavily on the theme of
searching to belong as a key component in her struggle, although other participants discussed the
idea of connecting with others in their program as a way to stay focused. All participants
acknowledged some struggle throughout their role balancing experience and each verbalized
questioning of self at times; however, Amanda focused heavily on the self-doubt she experienced
as she attempted to maintain balance in all arenas of her life. Regarding self-doubt, when asked
how she envisioned fitting the role of doctoral student into her life, she stated:

I was probably in a panic, like, 'What am I going to do, like where will this fit in?' And I
still some days don't even know how it's fitting in. But honestly, I think I was really
concerned because I was like, 'I work full-time. I don't want to be in school forever, so I want to go full-time if I can or at least take two classes this semester.

The third super-ordinate theme of how to balance included the remaining four of the 11 themes: juggling life, support, spirituality, and mind-body connection. The theme how to balance is inclusive of the practices in which participants engaged and to which they attribute their success in balancing, and the advice they passed along to future women of color walking a similar path. Giselle, Christy, Vera Firefly, and Africa focused on juggling life as the way they balance. Juggling included constant prioritizing, choosing the most important task at any given moment, and doing multiple tasks at once. Christy and Africa attributed their ability to juggle to the support received from the workplace, family, and friends. Christy and Amanda identified spirituality as the source of strength that allows them to juggle. Additionally, Vera Firefly focused on maintaining a healthy mind-body connection as an integral component to balancing the multiple roles of education, work, and significant relationships.

Relationship to Previous Research

In this section, my research findings are related to the previous research presented in chapter two: Role of Black Women in U.S. Society, Black women and their role as worker, Black women and significant relationships, and the interplay among work, family, and education are explored. The super-ordinate themes are used to answer the primary research question, “What is the role balancing experience of Black female counselor education doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships?”

Role of Black Women in U.S. Society

It has been suggested that contemporary Black women carry expectations to engage in multiple roles due to a longstanding history of Black women working outside of the home while
c caretaking for their families (Hamilton, 1995). In this study, a criterion for participation was involvement in multiple roles, specifically the roles of student, worker, and participant in a significant relationship. A list of roles was constructed for each participant based on her interviews. Each participant identified one or more relationships that she considered significant. Though I was interested primarily in the impact of each role on the system of roles, most participants mentioned the impact on self of engaging in multiple roles. The super-ordinate theme of past influences present encompasses participants’ perceptions of the roles in which Black women should engage, as defined by historical and societal norms. In the following section, the literature on Black women and their role as worker is related to the first super-ordinate theme, past influences present.

Black Women and Their Role as Worker

Black women in the role of worker have been analyzed in terms of historical influence and familial needs (Burges, 1994; Davis, 1981; Hamilton, 1995; Matthews & Rodin, 1989). Historically, Black women worked due to demand (slavery) or to provide financial support to their family (Burges, 1994; Davis, 1981; Hamilton, 1995; Matthews & Rodin, 1989). Findings of this study supported these results, in that my participants expressed that they have maintained employment as a result of expectations and a need to help care financially for self or family. For example, Vera Firefly reminisced on a time when she did not work. Then money became a source of contention in her household, and she entered the job market to provide financial security for her family. She stated “there was great anxiety during that period when there were less resources.” During that time, Vera Firefly went back to work and then started her own business. Christy focused on the fact that, although working was an option for her, the alternative of living on government assistance was not appealing to her. Christy and Africa both
reported feeling societal pressures to handle work and family roles without complaint. Additionally, they both stated that they are the primary caretakers in their home, both by default and by choice as described by Burgess (1994). Burgess (1994) described the history of Black women as being laborers by day and caretakers by night. Africa summed up the present-day implications of this historical experience by stating:

I just want to speak a little bit about maybe what I have perceived to be kind of characteristic of Black women in general, which speaks to years ago in slavery where we have had to just take leadership roles and some of us, we still had to be good mothers and good wives and know how to work that field and do whatever we needed to do to take care of our home and take care of our loved ones. I think that speaks a lot to even where we are now generations later. Still doing so much and balancing so many roles.

**Wage equity.** Of the participants in my study, only Christy made reference to having more work but earning less pay than peers as a specific challenge she experiences as a Black woman. She stated that her job is a combination of two positions, whereas her White male counterpart has half the responsibility but receives more pay. Christy’s experience is congruent with the statistics reported by the Census Survey Population (2011) that Black women are receiving lower wages than their White counterparts for identical work.

**Work-family conflict.** The super-ordinate theme of *struggle to have it all* encompasses the perceived conflict experienced by participants while attempting to balance work and family roles. In previous studies, conflict was identified as the inability to meet the demands of two roles that are mutually incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Singh, 2003; Gregory & Milner, 2009).
All participants discussed experiencing work-family conflict as they were trying to balance competing roles. For example, Africa and Vera Firefly, both self-employed, discussed the struggle of working at awkward times of the day and night in an effort to give attention to the family. Vera Firefly shared that she would spend time with her child during the day and attempt to accomplish multiple duties, which included household and external work responsibilities, while her child was asleep. Vera Firefly acknowledged that this struggle led her to feel exhausted. For Christy, work-family conflict was an issue because she was unwilling to compromise her role as a mother. Thus, as Christy consciously made the decision to take on the roles of worker and primary caretaker, she had to figure out how to accomplish all of her work responsibilities while not taking any time away from her role as a mother. Amanda and Giselle had similar experiences; both stated that their work roles bled over into their personal time, which impacted their time with family. Giselle reflected on the times at home in the midst of family time when she might have to work on a task that needed to be completed for work.

My participants all acknowledged that, although each role was important, they were unwilling to compromise on certain roles. For example, Amanda and Africa were uncompromising regarding maintaining their education and career. Giselle, Christy, and Vera Firefly reported that one or more of their significant relationships were not up for negotiation when conflict occurred. For example, Giselle verbalized being unwilling to sacrifice her relationship with God, whereas Christy and Vera Firefly both shared an unwillingness to sacrifice their relationship with their children.

The participants’ experiences in this study were congruent with Hill’s (2005) assumption that work and family influence is bidirectional. In fact, all five participants in this study acknowledged that their work and family roles had an impact on each other.
Black Women and Significant Relationships

Continuing with the super-ordinate theme of struggle to have it all, participants discussed the importance of their significant relationships within their struggle to have it all. Participants discussed benefits and disadvantages associated with each relationship. Previous research by Butler (1994) and Rogers (2006) revealed that spirituality and family are two common relationships for Black women. Consistent with Butler’s (1994) and Rogers’ (2006) findings, significant relationships identified by the participants in this study were intimate relationship, parent-child relationship, extended family relationship, and relationship with spirituality. Expanding on current literature, participants in this study also identified the relationship with self as significant.

**Spirituality.** In regards to spirituality, it has been posited that Black women use spirituality as a source of strength to resist negative social messages and as a paradigm to evaluate experiences when meaning is not understood (Patterson & McClure, 2009; Watt, 2003). All participants in this study had spiritual beliefs, which they utilized as a coping skill while struggling to balance roles. This finding is consistent with previous literature on the role of spirituality the lives of Black women. Specifically, Giselle and Africa spoke at length about their relationship with God. Both insisted that their relationship with God remains the first priority in their lives. Africa sought clarity through spiritual practices when she met obstacles in her life, whereas Giselle’s experience was more premeditative in a sense that she sought strength from her spirituality prior to engaging in activities.

**Family.** In regards to family relationships, all five participants listed a familial relationship as significant to their experience. Family relationships included intimate relationships, relationships with their children, relationships with their parents, and extended
familial relationships. Consistent with findings of Bailey-Iddrisu (2010) and DeNeal (2008), participants in this study identified familial relationships as an integral part of doctoral success, but also as a source of contention due to competing roles. All participants emphasized some aspect of familial support as a factor in being able to successfully achieve educational goals. Africa and Christy had similar experiences with the support received from their partners. Both noted that their partner encourages them at times when they feel doubt about their capabilities. For example, Africa’s partner encouraged her to continue applying for doctoral programs when she was not accepted into her first choices. Christy shared that her partner provides continual support during times when she struggles the most with her educational endeavors. Amanda also stated that her family and partner were major supporters throughout her educational journey. She referred to them as her cheerleaders, coaches, and motivational speakers.

Conversely, one participant discussed stressors associated with balancing her familial roles with educational responsibilities, which was consistent with Patterson’s (2006) finding that personal relationships (like any other role) can impact other aspects of life. Vera Firefly shared that her educational responsibilities “added a bit more stress” to her relationship with her husband. She also perceived an underlying resentment from her husband because she was pursuing further education before or instead of him.

**Interplay Among Work, Family, and Education**

The super-ordinate theme of *how to balance* encompasses the interplay among work, family, and education roles as well as the best practices that allowed the participants in this study to achieve balance. All participants discussed contradictions among the work, home, and educational roles that they engage in daily. This paradoxical relationship, reported by Glezer and Wolcott (1999), was validated by participant experience in this research study. Christy reported
that there was no fluidity between her work and education roles but stated that her education and family roles are somewhat fluid because her child is a student and thus understands “that mommy is a student now.” Christy explained that during the workday, she supervised others clinically, but when she arrived at school, she felt that her clinical skills were being questioned. Similarly, Giselle related the experience of being proficient at work but then having to explain clinical decisions to professors when at school. Amanda, Vera Firefly, and Africa focused more on the lack of fluidity that occurs at home due to work and education responsibilities. Africa verbalized that she is the boss at work but when she gets home, she believes that her husband should lead the household. Amanda had a similar experience of being self-sufficient at work; her conflict was in shutting work off to spend time with her significant other. Vera Firefly’s lack of fluidity was noticed in her inability to turn off her mothering role when she was outside the home. Vera Firefly shared her passion for mothering her children and admitted that at times she has to stop herself from caretaking and/or advising others.

After participants shared how one role influences all other roles, they were asked to share their tools for balancing education, work, and significant relationships. Of the four themes included in the super-ordinate theme of how to balance, two supported the findings of Rogers’ (2006) study: support and spirituality. Although all participants mentioned support systems during their interview, two participants specifically focused on support systems as major factors in their role balance experience, consistent with the findings of DeNeal (2008) and Bailey-Iddrisus (2010). Two participants also identified spirituality as an integral factor in the role balance experience. Just as Allison and Broadus (2009) stated that their educational journey was divinely ordered, Christy and Amanda revealed that their experience was encapsulated by their spiritual beliefs, which provided solace through difficult times. Additionally, participants stated
that balancing occurs through constant negotiating of roles. Consistent with Brown and Watson’s (2010) findings, participants in this study used the term “juggling” to describe the constant negotiating that they believed was necessary to balance roles. Adding to the current body of literature, engaging in mind-body connection was an important role balance technique utilized by one participant in this study.

**Implications for Counselor Education Programs**

A review of the literature revealed no studies that specifically explored the experience of Black women engaging in doctoral studies while maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships. This qualitative study provided insight into such experiences. A better understanding of the experience of Black female doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships can help universities in their efforts to recruit and retain Black females in doctoral programs. Understanding the perceived experience of Black female doctoral students balancing education, work, and significant relationships can validate the experience of future and current Black female doctoral students balancing multiple roles. Furthermore, understanding the lived experience of Black female doctoral students can assist counselor educators to be aware of the particular struggle of Black women as they matriculate through doctoral studies. Additionally, counselor educators may gain information from this study to assist in retention and increased graduation rates of Black females.

A common experience of the five participants in this study was the perceived lack of support or general understanding from faculty; especially from faculty of the majority culture given the dearth of Black full-time faculty members at the post graduate level. The insight gained from this study can help majority faculty members understand the Black female experience. This understanding might assist in retention through building a rapport with Black
female doctoral students and helping them to feel that their experience is valid and it matters. In addition, the understandings acquired from this study could be a catalyst to strengthen communication between majority faculty and Black female doctoral students.

Research on Black female counselor education doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships can also have a positive impact on counselor education programs by encouraging more Black females into PWIs. Having a greater understanding of how other Black women interpret their experiences can serve as inspiration as well as validation that, although there are obstacles, it is possible to obtain a doctoral degree in counselor education at a PWI while balancing work and significant relationships.

Implications for Counselor Education Doctoral Students

In summary, a thorough review of the literature did not reveal any studies that specifically explored the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships. Exploring how the participants in this study navigated through doctoral studies while balancing work and significant relationship may benefit future counselor education doctoral students who may also struggle with role balance. Moreover, this study may provide a needed validation to encourage more Black women into doctoral studies. Findings of this study do not suggest that there is one right way to balance multiple roles while engaged in doctoral studies. Nevertheless, the themes identified in this study provide a blueprint to utilize as students navigate through doctoral studies while balancing multiple roles.

The three super-ordinate themes encompass the entire role balance experience of five Black female counselor education doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships while providing a roadmap based on the best practices of participants in
this study. The first super-ordinate theme, \textit{past influences present}, encourages awareness of how individuals perceive history and how those perceptions will impact their current day experiences. The second super-ordinate theme, \textit{struggle to have it all}, normalizes the experience of making sacrifices, self-doubt, searching to belong, and life changes. The third super-ordinate theme, \textit{how to balance}, gives suggestions of resources needed to successfully balance. For the participants in this study resources such as having a support system, believing in something greater than self (spirituality), having a mind-body connection, and engaging in constant juggling were necessary in the quest for role balance. Following this blueprint will not guarantee the successful balance of education, work, and significant relationships but it does give prospective doctoral students a baseline to begin with and adjust as needed for their own personal experience.

Although all participants used some variation of the word challenging to describe their role balance experience, three participants believed that their experience, while challenging, has changed them for the better. Perhaps the constant negotiation of priorities experienced by these participants was the catalyst needed to effect change. As such, when asked if they would encourage Black women to embark on this journey with multiple roles in tow, all participants said “yes.” Vera Firefly encouraged women to complete doctoral education before having children. Amanda suggested that Black women be organized by having a research topic identified in an effort to streamline coursework with the dissertation process. Giselle stated that Black women needed to “step out on faith.” Christy encouraged Black women to not lose sight of why they are choosing to do it all. She wanted Black women to know that they do not have to sacrifice self and as long as they are clear on why they are choosing to do it all. She believed that times of sacrifice will then be better understood and accepted. Finally, Africa wanted Black
women to know that it is possible to have it all; she felt the way to accomplish it all was by keeping God first.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The field of counselor education would benefit from additional research that explores the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students from a quantitative perspective. All participants verbalized their appreciation for the current research topic and for allowing them to share their perceived experience. All participants shared the belief that this research topic was needed as they felt previous literature has failed to consider Black women in education and role balance research. Results from this study may provide a baseline for future researchers to design a quantitative study to survey larger populations and increase generalizability of findings. A suggestion for quantitative inquiry is to utilize the practices and resources stated by the participants in this study to determine if those practices and resources are more widely applicable. Best practices under the super-ordinate theme *how to balance* include having a support system, believing in something greater than self (spirituality), having a mind-body connection, and engaging in constant juggling. A random survey could be employed to validate or challenge the findings of this study as they relate to determining applicability to the general population.

Additionally, further qualitative research is needed to expand knowledge of the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students beyond work and relational roles. Considerations in this study were given to the roles of student, work, and significant relationships, based on previous research. Student roles were deemed relevant based on the National Center for Education Statistics report on the consistent increase in of Black women seeking higher education. Work roles were identified based on the upward trend of occupational
averages for Black women in the U.S. The role of significant relationships was included as a result of studies indicating that Black women held interpersonal and spiritual relationships in the highest regard (i.e., Allison & Broadus, 2009; Butler, 1994; Caputo, 1999; Patterson, 2006; Patton & McClure, 2009; Rogers, 2006; Watt, 2003). Further qualitative research is needed to continue learning more about other roles that may be significant in the Black female role balance experience.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the lack of generalizability, although generalizability is not a goal of qualitative research. IPA procedures suggest utilizing a small sample so that value can be placed on the individual experience. Although a small sample was used in this study within the guidelines of IPA, a larger sample may have produced a broader understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Another possible limitation was participant bias. Participants were recruited through university listserves of CACREP-accredited programs and through snowball sampling. Participants responded to an emailed recruitment letter with their contact information to communicate interest in participation. Two participants specifically discussed their willingness to participate, stating that they felt a responsibility to tell their story because the stories of Black women are rarely explored. I encouraged each participant to share her experience without concern for positive or negative responses; however, there was a sense that participants shared ownership of helping me, a Black woman, complete the dissertation and thereby complete my doctoral studies.

Another potential limitation was my researcher bias, due to my own experience as a Black female counselor education doctoral student balancing full-time employment and
significant relationships. I disclosed to all participants prior to engaging in the interview that I was also a member of this population. I provided a simple disclaimer but did not provide details of my experience, to avoid influencing the participants’ perceived experiences. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions and to refrain from answering any questions that they were uncomfortable answering. Some participants asked general questions about my research topic and asked if they could contact me in the future for more information regarding this study. No additional questions were asked about my personal experience with the topic. I acknowledged my biases at certain points during the interviews. One participant said, “so you know what I’m talking about” as my body language seemed to commiserate with her experience. In that instance and others that were similar, participants were asked to elaborate so as not to impose my own perception onto their experience. An audit trail and journal were kept throughout the data collection and analysis process to bracket biases and track personal responses to participant experiences. Lastly, IPA places value on the researchers’ experience as a tool for analysis. As such, it should be noted that other researchers might interpret the data differently through their own personal experiential lenses.

**Personal Reflections**

Reflecting on my experience as a researcher, I realized that the entire research experience was both humbling and rewarding for me at the same time. I was pleased to have had the opportunity to meet the participants and hear their stories. Furthermore, I was honored by their candor and their trust in me to present their personal thoughts and experiences to the world. During the research process, I worked to remain unbiased regarding the participants’ experience, but I must admit that I am forever impacted by their stories. As I gathered and analyzed data, I made every attempt to act ethically and professionally by bracketing my personal biases and not
allowing them to penetrate the personal perceived experience of the participants. I also made attempts to dissociate from their personal experience so as to not become personally connected or intertwined into their experience. This proved to be challenging for me as I listened and read their interviews over and over again. I utilized journaling as I interpreted the data to keep my personal emotions separate from the actual analysis. This struggle emphasized the extent to which I connected with my participants’ stories.

I also struggled to separate my clinician self from my interviewer self. As a trained clinical family therapist, I was able to identify interaction patterns in the lives of the participants based on their perceived experience. Automatically, I wanted to acknowledge those patterns so that the participants could be aware of them and either change or keep them as needed; however, I realized that this was not my purpose. I also had to fight the urge to ask more in-depth questions about certain aspects of the participants’ experience, particularly about the impacts of personal relationships. To ensure that I remained on task, I would write those questions down and determine at a later time if they were relevant to the main research question. If relevant, I revisited those questions during the follow-up interview. As those issues arose for me, I would journal about them and bring awareness to my personal issues so that they would not impact the data analysis.

Perhaps my greatest struggle was similar to that of each of the participants I interviewed for this research study. I struggled with working on this dissertation, maintaining my full-time job, staying connected to my husband and extended family, adjunct teaching, and starting a private practice business. Prior to beginning the data collection for this dissertation, I truly believed that I was giving 100% to all of those roles concurrently. Now, thanks to the five participants in this study, I have gained insight that I may be in fact giving 100% but it is only to
one role at any given moment. I also realized that, just as the participants in this study stated, my priorities change from day to day and even from hour to hour. This is how I maintain balance in my life and work to accomplish the many goals that I have set for myself. Now that this journey is ending for me with the data collected, analyzed, and discussed, I want to assure my participants that I hear them and that their experience is valid.
References


Allison, A.M.W., & Broadus, P.R.B. (2009). Spirituality then and now: Our journey through higher education as women of faith. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 120*, 77-86.


Appendix A: Invitation to Participate (University)

Dear Graduate Professors,

My name is Ariel Encalade Mitchell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting research for my dissertation titled, *The Role Balance Experience of Black Female Counselor Education Doctoral Students Maintaining Full-Time Employment and Significant Relationships*. I am studying under the direction of Dr. Zarus Watson and Dr. Barbara Herlihy. The purpose of my study is to explore the lived experience of Black female doctoral students balancing the multiple roles of student, full-time employee, and significant relationships.

I am seeking six doctoral level counseling students enrolled in a CACREP (or equivalent) counselor education program to participate in the study. Participants of the study will be asked to participate in an initial 60 to 90 minute interview and a follow up phone call interview not to exceed 30 minutes. All information will be kept confidential.

If an individual chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, no penalty will be assessed. Participants will be given contact information of Dr. Zarus Watson and Dr. Barbara Herlihy at the University of New Orleans should they have any questions regarding their rights as a research participant. The University of New Orleans Institutional Review Board has approved this study (IRB#02Feb14). For more information regarding the approval of the study, you may contact Ann O'Hanlon of UNO IRB-Human Subject at 504-280-3990. I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Should you agree to participate, you may begin by clicking on the attachment (Invitation To Participate) and return the information to asencala@uno.edu.

Respectfully,

Ariel Encalade Mitchell, NCC, LPC-S, LMFT
asencala@uno.edu
Appendix B: Invitation to Participate (Participants)

My name is Ariel Encalade Mitchell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting research for my dissertation titled, *The Role Balance Experience of Black Female Counselor Education Doctoral Students Maintaining Full Time Employment and Significant Relationships*. I am studying under the direction of Dr. Zarus Watson and Dr. Barbara Herlihy. The University of New Orleans Institutional Review Board has approved this study (IRB#02Feb14). For more information regarding the approval of the study, you may contact Ann O'Hanlon of UNO IRB-Human Subject at 504-280-3990.

I am seeking six doctoral level counseling students enrolled in a CACREP (or equivalent) counselor education program to participate in the study. Participants of the study will be asked to participate in an initial 60 to 90 minute interview via in person, Skype, or Facetime and a follow up phone call interview not to exceed 30 minutes. All information will be kept confidential.

To participate in the research, you should meet the five criteria listed below.

Place a check by each criterion you meet.

- Registered as a doctoral student at least part time. _____
- Attending a CACREP or equivalent university. _____
- Self-identity as a Black or African American female. _____
- Engaged in a self-defined significant relationship. _____
- Working as a full-time employee at least 30 hours or more per week. _____

Your participation is voluntary. Information you provide will not be part of your degree requirements and your professors will not have access to any of your information. Refusal to participate at any time will involve no penalties and/or benefits.

Should you meet the criteria for participation and wish to participate, please provide contact information (i.e. name, email, phone number) to Ariel Encalade Mitchell at asencala@uno.edu. You will be contacted within the week to confirm your participation.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Ariel Encalade Mitchell, NCC, LPC-S, LMFT
Doctoral Candidate, University of New Orleans
asencala@uno.edu
Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Thank you for your interest in this research study. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting research for my dissertation titled, *The Role Balance Experience of Black Female Counselor Education Doctoral Students Maintaining Full-Time Employment and Significant Relationships*. I am studying under the direction of Dr. Zarus Watson and Dr. Barbara Herlihy. The purpose of my study is to explore the lived experiences of Black female doctoral students balancing the role of student, full-time employment, and significant relationships.

My study will consist of an initial and follow-up interview. The initial interview will take place in person at a mutually agreed upon location where privacy can be provided. The purpose of the follow-up interview is to have each participant read the transcriptions of their original interviews and the analysis for accuracy. The initial interview will be video and digitally recorded. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, each digitally recorded tape and transcript will be assigned corresponding identifiers (pseudonym names) before the interview starts. A transcriptionist will be hired to transcribe each digital recording and will be required to sign a statement of confidentiality. I will keep all digital recordings in a secure place and will destroy all recordings after being transcribed and analyzed.

The result of this study may be published and presented at conferences but all efforts to protect identities will be utilized. Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Please keep the contact information for Dr. Zarus Watson and Dr. Barbara Herlihy, co-chairs at the University of New Orleans, should you have questions about your rights as a research participant. The University of New Orleans Institutional Review Board has approved this study (IRB#02Feb14). For more information regarding the approval of the study, you may contact Ann O'Hanlon of UNO IRB-Human Subject at 504-280-3990.

Participating in this study has possible benefits and risks that you should be aware of. Benefits include contributing to important scholarly research about the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and intimate relationships. Risks include being asked to share personal information that may cause discomfort. As such, you do not have to answer any question/s that you do not wish to answer. Counseling resources will be made available to you for follow up should the need arise.

I will be in contact shortly to schedule follow up interviews. If you want more information regarding this study you may contact Ariel Mitchell at (504) 906-5457 or asencala@uno.edu. Thank you for your interest in this study.
Appendix D: Informed Consent

I am currently conducting a qualitative research study under the direction of Dr. Zarus Watson and Dr. Barbara Herlihy in the College of Education and Human Development for the PhD in Counselor Education at the University of New Orleans. The purpose of this study is to explore the role balance experience of Black female doctoral students maintaining full-time employment and significant relationships.

I am requesting your participation in this study, which will involve an initial digitally recorded 60-90 minute interview that will be transcribed and a digitally recorded follow-up 30-45 minute phone interview. The purpose of the follow-up interview is to confirm accuracy of the transcription of the first interview as well as to confirm the analysis of the initial interview. You will be asked to review the transcript of the initial interview as well as the analysis prior to the second interview.

Participation in my research project is voluntary. Information you provide will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be provided to maintain anonymity. Refusal to participate at any time will involve no penalties and/or benefits. There are no foreseeable risks to participants. There is no direct benefit to you; your participation will possibly increase counselor educators’ awareness of the experience of Black women during doctoral studies. Your personal information will not be divulged. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, each digitally recorded tape and transcript will be assigned corresponding identifiers (pseudonym names) before the interview starts. A transcriptionist will be hired to transcribe each digital recording and will be required to sign a statement of confidentiality. I will keep digital recordings in a secure place and will destroy the recordings after being transcribed and analyzed. The results of this study may be published and presented at different conferences; however, all efforts to protect your identify will be utilized.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Herlihy at (504) 280-6662 at the University of New Orleans for answers to questions about this research, your rights as a human subject, and your concerns regarding a research-related injury. Please contact me if you have any questions concerning my research study at 504-906-5457. You may also contact Dr. Zarus Watson, co-chair of my dissertation committee at (504) 280-6834.

By signing the signature line below, you are stating that you have read and understood or have had the informed consent explained to you to your satisfaction and are willing to participate in this study.

______________________________________________
Participant Name (printed) and Date

______________________________________________
Participant Signature and Date
Appendix E: IRB Approval letter

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Zarus Watson
Co-Investigator: Barbara Herlihy
Date: February 12, 2014

Protocol Title: “The Role Balance Experience of Black Female Counselor Education Doctoral Students Maintaining Full-Time Employment and Significant Relationships”

IRB#: 02Feb14

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101 category 2, due to the fact that any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research
Appendix F: Statement of Confidentiality

I, ________________________, external auditor/transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality for any and all audio-tapes and documents received from Ariel Encalade Mitchell related to his doctoral study on *The Role Balance Experience of Black Female Doctoral Students Maintaining Full-Time Employment and Significant Relationships*. I agree to the following:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;

2. To not copy any audio-tapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts and documents unless specifically requested to do so by Ariel Encalade Mitchell.

3. To store all study-related audio-tapes and documents in a safe, locked, and secure location as long as the materials are in my possession;

4. To return all audio-tapes and study-related documents to Ariel Encalade Mitchell in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audio-tapes, files and documents I will have related to the study.

____________________________________
External Auditor/Transcriber’s Name (printed)

____________________________________
External Auditor/Transcriber’s Signature

____________________________________
Date
Appendix G: Initial and Follow-up Protocol

**Initial Interview:**

1. Arrive early at the prearranged interview site. Begin the verbal exchange with introductions and ask for each participant’s permission to begin digital recording.
2. Discuss inclusion criteria to ensure participant is eligible to participant in the study.
3. Present the informed consent and provide time for the participant to read the form, and verbaly summarize the form to ensure the participant understands the form. Respond to any questions or or concerns (see Appendix F).
4. Retrieve the signed consent form. Explain the purpose of the interview, guidelines, and assignment of the pseudonym name for the interviews, journals, and syllabi for the purpose of confidentiality. Explain the interviews will be transcribed and ensure transcription confidentiality. Explain the interview should last approximately 60-90 minutes but could be longer.
5. Demographic Questions include:
   a. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
   b. Age: ______
   c. Race: _____
   d. Doctoral Degree Program: __________
   e. Year of Anticipated Graduation: __________
6. Example interview questions include:
   - Tell me about the time in your life when you decided to return to school for your doctorate in counselor education.
   - Can you tell me about the roles that you were involved in at the time?
   - How did you envision fitting the role of student into your life?
   - Once you enrolled in your doctoral studies, did you feel that your responsibilities were different from those of students of other races/cultures?
   - Did your life change at work and home when you became a student? If so, in what ways?
   - Was role strain experienced, and if so, how is role strain managed and/or minimized?
   - Was there any support received while balancing the multiple roles, and if so, in what form?
   - How do or could support systems influence the role balance experience?
   - How did you find that you were able to balance work, home, and school?
   - What are the best practices that you could recommend to others?
   - What resources did your family, place of employment, or universities provide that made the process of managing multiple roles more difficult and/or easier?
   - What advice would you give other Black women who may be considering adding the student role to their lives that already include the roles of partner and employee?
7. Provide time for a participant to provide feedback, ending comments, and reflections.
8. End with reminders of confidentiality and the follow-up interview reminder.

**Follow-up Protocol:**
1. Call participant at the agreed upon time to begin the follow-up interview. Begin the verbal exchange with introductions. Ask for each participant’s permission to begin digital recording.

2. Present the transcribed interview to the participant with instructions to check the material for accuracy. Any changes made will be noted in the margin of the transcripts prior to data analysis.

3. Summarize responses and begin termination.

4. Allow for debriefing, ask for feedback and reflections if needed.

5. Terminate with a closing statement.
Vita

Ariel Encalade Mitchell was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. She obtained a bachelor’s of science degree in Psychology from the University of New Orleans in 2006. In 2008 she graduated from Our Lady of Holy Cross College with a master of arts in Marriage and Family Counseling. She entered the graduate program at the University of New Orleans in 2009 to pursue a PhD in Counselor Education.