Men's Lived Experiences in a Counselor Training Program: A Phenomenological investigation

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ABSTRACT

MEN’S LIVED EXPERIENCES IN A COUNSELOR TRAINING PROGRAM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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Northern Illinois University, 2020
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This qualitative study explored the lived experience of seven counselors-in-training (CITs) who are men in one accredited masters-level counselor preparation program in the Midwestern United States. Over the course of a single interview that ranged in length from approximately one to two hours each, CITs were asked to describe and define their gender identity and expression, describe their experiences of being men in their families and communities, in their respective counseling programs, and as they reflect on the process of becoming a counselor in a woman-concentrated profession. Predominate gender socialization patterns in the United States in which men worked and women stayed at home were disrupted in large part by the decades-long women’s movement which fueled the increase of women in the workplace. However, women were often slated into the helping professions and the “soft sciences” because of assumed characteristics and abilities, such that they became a nontraditional or atypical career choice for men who have different assumed characteristics and abilities. Men who choose to become counselors are a “rare breed” and make up less than 20% of the counselor trainee population. Simply by statistics, these men experience contextual minority status, yet
they still carry a certain amount of assumed privilege. This assumed privilege may cause conflict in peer relationships, in student-faculty interactions, and in counselor and professional identity development. Men of color and men of other diverse social locations may additionally experience being a token minority, despite still holding the privilege of being a man in society. In line with the counseling profession’s ethical standards and the standards of the accrediting body, faculty in training programs are expected to be responsive to the intersectional identities of all counselors-in-training if they are to strive for holistic multicultural and social justice competency. To that end, men are not typically considered a cultural group within this paradigm and thus may be overlooked. This study sought to explore their experiences. Following the research question and sub questions in the interpretative phenomenological data analysis, findings indicated a broad range of experiences for men in the counselor training program. Several threads connected some of these men, but one emerged as a thread that connected them all. They each experienced adversity as boys and young men as a result of not fully meeting society’s expectations for masculinity and manhood. Navigating the social consequences of not neatly fitting in, they forged their own path, paths which ultimately led each participant to the profession of counseling, an atypical career choice for men, but an authentic one for these participants.

Keywords: Masculinity, gender identity, gender expression, counselors-in-training, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, atypical career choice
MEN’S LIVED EXPERIENCES IN A COUNSELOR TRAINING PROGRAM:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

BY

SUZANNA MARIE WISE
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Doctoral Director: Melissa J. Fickling
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of this work is done in isolation, but I did not get here alone, and I thank every single person who ever motivated me toward and through this goal. I appreciate you. To my dissertation director, Melissa Fickling: thank you for your invaluable mentorship. You have gone above and beyond for me and I am eternally grateful. I appreciate your excitement and immediate agreement to head up this amazing group of brilliant thinkers and radical supporters. To Katy and Adam: your keen insight and feedback helped frame my cloudy thinking on several occasions. I know my project is better with your guidance, validation, and encouragement. Jane, thank you for bringing me into the fold and supporting my leadership development and growth.

Pat, Lucy, and Elisa, my effervescent cheerleaders, accountability partners, and unfailing supporters, thank you I am so blessed to have you as friends and colleagues. To my NIU students, thank you for teaching me how to teach and supervise and for the opportunity to share in your counselor identity development. Kelsey, TJ, and Jess, thank you for your friendship.

To my GWU tribe, where my foundation for learning and growth was infused with life and longevity. My mentors, Pat Tate, Paul Tschudi, and Rebecca Dedmond; my dear friends and colleagues across GSEHD; and to all the doc students who went before me.

To Katerina, Sam, Jason, and Hasan:. Our friendship is a very bright spot in my life.

Finally, to Dr. Chris Erickson: The first person to act as if doctoral work was an inevitability for me when I was just trying to make it through my master’s program; an early faculty mentor who challenged me, encouraged me, honored my life experiences, and who we lost too soon. You are forever in my heart and a guiding voice in my training of new counselors.
DEDICATION

First, to my mother who did not live to see this particular accomplishment but cheered me on in every attempted endeavor and delighted in telling stories about her kids. Having your picture in front of me daily motivated this process. Thank you dearly for inspiring my love of education, supporting my lifelong learning, and being the World Book Lady. I became a good student and educator because of you.

To my sister and my father, you both tirelessly supported this undertaking and frequently asked me what I was working on so I would return to the task. It is impossible to count all the ways I felt cared for during this tumultuous process. Please know how much you are loved and appreciated. I became a good worker, friend, and helper because of both of you.

To Michal, you were with me long before my graduate school adventures began, and here you are as I take the final step of my doctoral journey. I appreciate all the ways you have encouraged me through this process and how you listened when things were rough. I am grateful for your confidence in me and I appreciate the mirth that you bring to my life.

Finally, I dedicate this to my seven participants who shared their stories with generosity and authenticity.
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1. SETTING THE STAGE

Introduction

This research study centered on men counselors-in-training (CITs) at the masters-level and their experiences as trainees for a profession comprised mostly of woman counselors. This study serves as a broad effort to forward the counseling profession’s dialogue on equity and inclusion as well as attempts to continue breaking down stereotypes and patterns of gender socialization (O’Neil, 2008). Because the counseling profession is a women-concentrated one (CACREP, 2019; Prosek & Hurt, 2014), the man’s voice is effectively a contextual minority in the classroom and in the mental health workplace. Therefore, I was interested in how men in a masters-level CIT program perceive and make sense of their positionality in both Western society, which gives them automatic power and privilege, and in counselor training programs increasingly focused on social justice where pre-service counselors learn to recognize, if not begin to dismantle these systems of power and privilege, at least as they operate in the CITs sphere of influence.

This focus is perpetuated by the ethical code of the American Counseling Association (ACA), the standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), and the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016); thus, my study is situated in the counseling program versus other mental health professional training programs at the masters level, such as in Counseling Psychology, Social Work, and Marriage and Family Therapy, and was further focused in one CACREP-accredited graduate program with concentrations in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling.
In this first chapter, I provide a greater orientation to the present study by describing the background and context for the research, explaining the purpose, rationale, and significance of the study, delineating my research questions, providing an overview of methodology, providing contextual definitions, and presenting a layout of the chapters to come.

**Professional Identity in Multicultural Competence and Social Justice**

The counseling and counselor education professions publicly promote diversity and inclusion (ACA, 2014; D’Andrea & Heckman, 2008; Ratts, et al., 2016) in the training of professional clinicians, faculty, and administrators. The American Counseling Association (ACA, n.d.-b) provides lobbying and activism efforts to support marginalized identities and communities (https://www.counseling.org/about-us/social-justice), and promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity in the curriculum of training and professional environments (Arredondo-Dowd & Gonsalves, 1980; Brubaker, Puig, Reese, & Young, 2010; Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010; Comstock, Hammer, Strentzsch, Cannon, Parsons, & Salazar, 2008; Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007). ACA’s most recent Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014) explicitly lists five values guiding the practice of professional counseling, among which two of these values emphasize social justice and taking a multicultural approach in working with clients, specifically stated as, “honoring diversity and embracing a multicultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts” (p. 3). Programs that have at least one academic course in multicultural topics will affirm the probability that counselors will work with a very diverse population of clients across their career and there is specific information they should know about various cultures as well as increase
their own self-awareness about the cultural identities they hold and how those interact with and inform their views on others’ cultural identities.

Researchers and educators in the counseling profession have been studying and writing about ways to increase counselors’ competence in working with diverse populations for the past several decades (Oh, Stewart, & Phelps, 2017), but in the early days of their scholarship the focus was on counselors from the dominant culture working with clients from minority groups (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008). With the significant changes in the demographics of the United States population since then, there has been a similar perceptible shift in client and counselor demographics. It is now more likely that a minority-identified counselor will work with a majority-identified client and thus the conversation in the profession has shifted toward a multicultural and intersectional approach (Chang, et al., 2010; Crethar, et al., 2008). The most recent version of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MJSCC) (Ratts, et al, 2016) guides this change in clinical practice. The authors of the MJSCC list four essential factors in counseling from a multicultural and social justice standpoint:

(a) understanding the complexities of diversity and multiculturalism on the counseling relationship; (b) recognizing the negative influence of oppression on mental health and well-being; (c) understanding individuals in the context of their social environment; and (d) integrating social justice advocacy into the various modalities of counseling (e.g., individual, family, partners, group) (pp. 30-31).

Focusing on equity and justice in the counseling profession means striving to represent an equitable amount of perspectives for greater learning and clinical practice potential. Due to the profession’s gender imbalance (Crockett, Elghoroury, Popiolek, & Wummel, 2018), men are currently a contextual minority in the field, thus uniquely challenging both men and women in their beliefs and attitudes about gender and the characteristics of helpers.
Situating the Study of Men

Men, due to intentional and purposeful institutional and cultural structures of privilege, are the inherent focus of nearly every space in society without due effort (Liu, 2017). However, in considering the counseling profession and counselor training environment, men occupy a small space in their role as students due to the woman-concentrated nature of the counselor-training program and thus experience something of a unique status (Cognard-Black, 2012). To provide greater context for this qualitative study, I include broad historical background on the structure of gender in the United States as it relates to the concept of masculinity. I also discuss how feminism as a social movement disrupted traditional understanding of gender and fueled how and what we currently know about the institutionalized nature of gender and its impact on men and women. Decades of research in the humanities posits that without being spurred on by feminism and the fight for women’s rights, men would likely not have the space to also free themselves from the constricting definitions and expressions of what characteristics constitute a man, a highly complicated process involving men coming to terms with their own vulnerability and emotional complexity (Kimmel, 2011).

Considering existing sociopolitical hierarchies, the privileges men hold may still play a role in their academic training, but ultimately the participants will be contextual, and in some cases, token minorities, depending on their additional cultural identities. I was interested in understanding these participants’ lived experiences, if they felt this conflict, how they made cognitive sense of this conflict, how they felt about this conflict, and how they act in the world because of this conflict (Chusmir, 1990; Cognard-Black, 2012; Kanter, 1997; Lemkau, 1984;
Simpson, 2005). Utilizing a qualitative paradigm allowed broad space for the participants to discuss their experiences, whether they were aware of, or felt that a conflict exists at all.

This study may contribute to the existing body of literature which has long troubled the essentialist notions that men must think and act a certain way simply by virtue of being a man (O’Neil, 2008), that they cannot seek and provide help (Heath, Brenner, Vogel, Lannin, & Strass, 2017), and that they do not have the capacity for healthy expression of feelings and emotions (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010), thus continuing to broaden our awareness of the socially constructed notions of gender (Smiler, 2014). Inherent in the counselor training of contemporary CACREP-accredited counseling programs, students have the structured opportunity to take a deeper look at themselves and who they are, as well as who they are in relation to others, which itself could be considered a radical or revolutionary act for men (hooks, 1989). This study will also illuminate how self-reflection about their gender affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally occurs for men training to be counselors.

**Background and Statement of Inquiry**

Prior to the second wave women’s movement, which approximately occurred from the 1960s to the 1980s, practitioners and educators in the mental health professions and training programs of psychology, psychiatry, and counseling were predominantly white men (Crockett, et al., 2018; Healey & Hays, 2012; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Further, foundational counseling and psychological theories, forms of clinical assessment, and research outcomes about counseling were mainly created for, and based on, men’s experiences (Cole, 2009). Once higher education became available to women students, the educational landscape began to shift toward their robust enrollment and women now outpace men in colleges and universities at all degree levels.
(National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). However, societal expectations in the early to mid-1900’s still placed women primarily in the home, and professional occupations were not freely available even to educated women. Responsibilities in marriage, taking care of the home and family, and working no more than part-time while their children were in school, restricted women’s upward mobility (Friedan, 1963).

The latter part of the second wave of the women’s movement incited an important shift in the gender composition of many professions for white women even if those women needed to perform and express their gender as men did in order to compete with them in their attempts to succeed (Dicker, 2016). While some opportunities expanded for black women and other women of color, they were largely relegated to lesser status careers and their access to equitable workplaces was extremely limited (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1989; Rojas, 2009). Together with these acute racial disparities, access to the workplace for women did not amount to the full range of employment statuses, such as access to executive positions. Further, phrases describing phenomena such as “glass ceiling” (Williams, 1992) and “sticky floor” (Berheide, 1992) meant that many women and most people of color were held in lower status positions with significant barriers placed on their path toward advancement, whereas white men had no such restrictions on their upward mobility and were assessed on their knowledge, skills, and abilities or by the professional connections they made as they ascended the career ladder (Cognard-Black, 2012). Despite the lack of real opportunity and advancement, the simple presence of people of color and women in the workplace allowed for the public perception of diversity and a striving for equality, and the belief that everyone had the chance for personal and professional success (Hite, 2006).
Gender in Counseling and Related Professions

The counseling field and the counselor training environment reflected similar dynamics as the mainstream workplace in the United States. In a study by Baggerly, Tan, Pichotta, and Warner (2017), the authors reviewed the past fifty years of diversity statistics across programs accredited by the APA and programs accredited by CACREP. Their findings indicated that faculty representation of psychologist and counselor training programs similarly echoed the fluctuating gender demographics in other employment types. A total sample of faculty \( n=1857 \) across APA programs \( n=81 \) and CACREP programs \( n=116 \) were represented in the study. Faculty in APA programs numbered 46% men and 54% women, and in CACREP programs they numbered 39% men and 60% women with the general U.S. population data at the time reflecting an approximate 50/50 balance. The faculty numbers represented in their study are an inversion from statistics fifty years prior when far fewer women were employed in the professoriate. The authors noted that faculty in APA programs did not begin to achieve gender parity until the 1990s and currently maintain a 1:1 ratio (Baggerly, et al., 2017, p. 298). This is compared to faculty in CACREP programs which shifted toward parity in the 1980s, yet once reached, women faculty continued the trend to outpace men faculty (Baggerly, et al., 2017; CACREP, 2017; United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

Students in practitioner training programs also reproduce these changing gender demographics. Statistics from CACREP, as cited in the Vital Statistics portion of their 2016 Annual Report, place the approximate gender breakdown of counseling students in accredited programs at 83% women to 17% men, and approximately 59% white students and 41% students
of color and international students (CACREP, 2017). It is unclear if this ratio remains stable when including CITs in unaccredited or pre-accredited programs.

As students transition out of their programs and become professional counselors, the gender divide remains stable. Evans (2013) and Evans, Duffey, and Englart-Carlson (2013) estimated that the gender breakdown of professional counselors trained in both accredited and non-accredited programs was approximately 73% women to 27% men. This breakdown may include counselors who are not currently working in the field yet have maintained their professional membership, such as licensed faculty members. It is unclear what the ratio is regarding pre-licensed and licensed counselors, or the number of licensed counselors who may be working in administrative rather than clinical counseling positions.

Like professional counseling, demographics in the field of professional psychology represented that women psychologists outpace men psychologists two to one, and that 83% of psychologists are white (APA, 2015). Occupations in other helping professions like teaching and nursing indicate that representation by men is far less than that of women (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; Cognard-Black, 2012) and thus are considered atypical career choices for men. The difference between helping professions like teaching or nursing and those in psychology is the perceptible decline in representation of men in counseling and psychology professions over the past several decades (Baggerly, et al., 2017; Crockett, et al., 2018) as the gender balance shifted in the workplace. For example, the APA reported that the number of men seeking psychology degrees dropped from 70% in 1975 to 30% in 2008 (Howard, et al., 1986).
Implications of Fewer Men in the Profession

Michel, Hall, Hays, and Runyan (2013) drew the inference that due to this gender imbalance, the counseling profession struggles to compensate counselors competitively and that it lacks the prestige of predominately men-oriented careers. Michel, et al. (2013) stipulated that the profession could benefit from an increase of men counselors to elevate it to the level of respect it deserves. This is a controversial suggestion in that a profession that teaches and practices social justice, and strives to empower marginalized groups, needs to intentionally leverage existing structural inequalities toward a goal that may never be reached. This may ultimately be a circular argument as a participant in a qualitative survey of counseling professionals in the United Kingdom by Therapy Today stated that, “Men, in general, are less likely to tolerate the poor terms and conditions, the voluntary hours, the poor career structure and the low pay. They are more ambitious in terms of financial success” (“Why are there so few male counsellors?”, 2017, para. 2). To further complicate matters, some faculty voices represented in Michel, Hays, and Runyan’s (2015) extension of Michel et al.’s (2013) research study were actively against adding more men trainees and disrupting the existing gender balance, as they feared it would take away from the perceived safe and open environment created by and for women students and faculty.

Beyond the training environment, researchers note that societal privilege may be leveraged in the field of professional counseling whereby men who are trained as counselors may only stay in the counseling profession long enough to achieve clinical licensure before becoming directors of counseling centers or leaders in other spaces, or they may eschew licensure for nonclinical positions (Cognard-Black, 2012; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). A
workplace concept coined by Williams (1992) called the “glass escalator” refers to the near-immediate opportunities men possess to step into leadership and administrative roles over women who may have more education, more relevant experience, or additional professional skills. Thus, disparity in opportunity can still exist even when the population statistics of the profession would assume women would hold more of these positions. This phenomenon is further reflective of perceived societal gender role preferences toward men’s power and leadership, affirmed by a recent Pew Research Social Trends survey (https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/interactives/strong-men-caring-women/) called *Strong Men, Caring Women* in which results indicated that “Americans are much more likely to use powerful in a positive way to describe men (67% positive) than women (92% negative) … [and] leadership and ambition as traits that society values more in men than in women” (Walker, Bialik, & van Kessel, 2018). Men may also choose to leave the daily work of counseling for a variety of doctoral programs leading to the professoriate and the counselor training environment. CACREP (2017) reported that the gender balance of doctoral students in 2016 rose slightly higher than their masters-level trainee counterparts. Men accounted for 24% of doctoral students and women were 76% of that population.

**Gender Socialization in Counseling**

Researchers have identified that the pattern of gender socialization in the United States and Western society in general likely influences help-seeking behaviors, in that men utilize counseling services less often than do women (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Cheng, et al., 2018; Daniluk, Stein, & Bockus, 1995) and men become counselors and other helping professionals at lower rates than do women (Forsman & Barth, 2017). Discussed extensively in Chapter Two,
prized characteristics of men include self-reliance, control, and toughness (Vandello & Boson, 2013; Weatherell & Edley, 2014) which may preclude men’s instincts to ask for help, even when they need it, or to position them to provide help to others to avoid a perceived sense of weakness (Wong, Ho, Wang, & Miller, 2017; Yousaf, Grunfeld, & Hunter, 2013). In a meta-analysis involving 669 studies and over 83,000 clients, Swift and Greenberg (2012) found that even after overcoming barriers toward help-seeking, one in four men will still drop out of treatment prematurely.

**Gender Matching in the Counseling Relationship**

In their attempt to draw client-based implications or conclusions from their study, Michel, et al. (2013) offered a light assumption that a lower number of men counselors might have some impact on how clients receive treatment and services; however, they note that true implications of this gender imbalance on the profession is yet unknown and in need of further research. One area of potential inquiry centers on clients’ gender preferences for their counselor. If there are fewer men counselors, there may be fewer gender matches for clients. While clients often have the opportunity to identify a gender preference for their counselor on the initial request form to receive services, there is disagreement in the counseling literature about whether clients hold real preferences for their counselors’ gender prior to the first meeting or if the impetus to select a gender preference on the intake form is driven by social forces (Bhati, 2014). While this may seem to be a plausible negative implication of the gender imbalance in the profession, Wintersteen, Mensinger, and Diamond (2005) call this assumption “clinical lore” (p. 400). Research on gender matching in client-counselor relationships only theoretically supports the assumption that clients prefer to work with counselors who are most like them (Bem, 1981).
Bhati (2014) cites that this preference initially seems significant and clinical settings strive to meet client requests, but that ultimately gender matching does not statistically affect counseling outcomes.

**Statement of the Problem**

Ultimately, research about the experiences of men as counseling trainees is scant, likely due to the understandable and necessary drive to uplift experiences of women and other marginalized groups. However, few studies explore the unique needs of men trainees or the benefits they might bring to their training programs. Several studies discuss andragogical experiences and issues related to teaching men’s studies or teaching gender studies courses that include men as the subject, but not in a counseling context (Crapser & Elder, 2013; Isacco & Mannarino, 2016; Isacco & Morse, 2015; Kilmartin, Addis, Mahalik, & O'Neil 2013; Kimmel, 1997; O'Neil & Renzulli 2013). Explored more thoroughly in Chapter Two, most of the extant research conducted on the topics under study here (i.e., men CITs, masculinity, and manhood, nontraditional career choices for men, and gender in the counseling profession overall) have distilled important descriptions and definitions about manhood, masculinity, gender role socialization, and the complexities that exist therein. Several studies specifically explore what it is like for men in the broad context of mental health, whether from the perspective of minimal help-seeking due to stigma or lack of access (Johnson, Oliffe, Kelly, Galdas, & Ogrodniczuk, 2012; O’Neil, 2008; Reed, 2014), or through alternative or accessible forms of help-seeking like workshops or classes (Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992), executive coaching (McKelley & Rochlen, 2010), or career counseling (Graef, Tokar, & Kaut, 2010). Many psychological researchers over the past three decades enquired as to what the helping professions could do to encourage more

Robertson and Fitzgerald (1992) surmised in a quantitative study of 445 college men that, “…it seems reasonable that men avoid a process that requires them to consider failure instead of success, cooperation instead of competition, and vulnerability instead of power” (p. 240). In fact, they found that “traditional masculine attitudes do seem to be negatively related to the willingness of men to seek professional psychological help” (p.244) and that “men who express highly masculine attitudes react more positively to descriptions of interventions that are consistent with masculine socialization processes” (p. 244). This assertion calls for counselors to tailor their marketing and treatment services to meet the needs of men in a variety of ways.

Many fewer studies utilize qualitative or mixed methodology in research about men, but when they do, they elicit rich and meaningful data about what it is like to live in a man’s skin. These studies cover a broad range of topics, such as: the experiences of African American men and fathers (Doyle, Clark, Cryer-Coupet, Nebbitt, Goldston, Estroff, & Magan, 2015; Doyle, Magan, Cryer-Coupet, Goldston, & Estroff, 2016; Johnson, 2016; Robinson, 2011), the experiences of stay-at-home fathers (Rochlen, Suizzo, McKelley, & Scaringi, 2008), feminist training and therapy with men students and clients (Alilunas, 2017; Hoover & Morrow, 2016; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Wolf, Williams, Darby, Herald, & Schultz, 2018), the experiences of young mens’ masculinities in school and their reflections in counseling (Burns, 2011; Reed, 2014); men counselor educator experiences with relationship boundary-setting (Ray, Huffman,
Christian, & Wilson, 2016), and the attitudes of counselor educators about men CITs (Michel et al., 2013; Michel, et al., 2015). A qualitative study recently published (Crockett, et al., 2018) also sheds light on this topic in that it also explores the lived experience of men CITs. Crockett et al.’s (2018) study exists as additional evidence that the experiences of men students may be a slowly-growing topic of interest, and that men CITs hold unique experiences in the counselor training environment.

A Research Context for the Study of Men

Chapter Two substantiates the social ideas involved in this study and describes the theoretical framework that provides context for discussion and understanding in the broader educational and social spheres in addition to further exploring related research. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a man’s voice continues to hold immense power and privilege in Western society at large, but by virtue of being fewer in number, men CITs can be considered a contextualized minority inside the counseling training program (Cognard-Black, 2004, 2012; Crockett, et al., 2018; Fujikura, 2008; Michel et al, 2013, Michel et al, 2015). Of these, men who hold a marginalized identity (e.g. non-white, non-heterosexual, non-Christian, disabled) can become a token minority (Cognard-Black, 2004, 2012; Crockett, et al., 2018) because educators and classmates may expect them to speak on behalf of all people who embody one or more of these identities, or answer for the oppressions that power and privilege create. As a result, they may experience an extinguishment of their viewpoints, or conversely, an amplification of them, depending on the context from which their classmates, colleagues, or instructors come (Alilunas, 2017; Crockett, et al., 2018; Michel et al, 2013, Michel et al, 2015). This may create a unique relatedness with traditionally marginalized groups, but the experience is usually temporary.
In this way, the environment of the training program may challenge participants’ perceptions of their existing power and privilege, juxtaposing automatic expectations for success as afforded them in society. Their experiences with educators and classmates could add to the existing emotionally taxing nature of counselor training, delaying the developmental processes toward creation of a professional counselor identity and that of a multiculturally competent and social justice-oriented counselor (Evans, 2013).

Through the intimate nature of a qualitative study, I sought to bear witness to the experiences of men inside the training environment of the counseling profession. Delved into more deeply in Chapter Three, I chose to explore this topic through a phenomenological semi-structured interview and the process of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In this work, I embrace a constructivist epistemological paradigm due to my positionality in the humanities and education, as compared to the positivist and objective sciences. My orientation is further specific to the counseling and counselor educator professions, which encourage self-definition and empowerment of personal identity factors as foundational to one’s life. To provide the widest space for response, I asked participants to provide their own definition and description of their gender identity and expression to better situate their authentic selves. Our shared rapport allowed for the emergence of participants’ unique perspectives and the co-creation of new knowledge in our dialogue. By uncovering personal histories and experiences, interrogating what it means to be a man in society, and more specifically, revealing what it means to be a man in a woman-concentrated profession, counselor educators will better be able to meaningfully deconstruct prevailing ideas about gender and the power those ideas have over us, as well as reveal the gaps we are missing in creating truer multicultural awareness.
in counselor training. In conceptualizing this project, I anticipated that some participants might describe an active desire to reject the traditional rules of gender, some might share progressive views on gender through lenses of the social conditioning in a counselor training program, and some participants might describe an essentialist and stereotypical perspective about the immutability of gender roles, abilities, and responsibilities. Still others shared views and experiences I could not anticipate, and which shaped this study in important ways.

**Purpose, Rationale and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological, semi-structured interview study was to explore the lived experiences of men CITs during the later clinical phase of their masters-level graduate studies in a CACREP-accredited program, or within three months of their graduation from the program. The advanced phase of study element is significant because it means that the participants would have completed a substantial number of course credits and would have many classroom experiences and at least some clinical experiences upon which to reflect. The results of this work might assist faculty across counseling programs to know more about the experiences of men students and to continue efforts ensuring that all voices in the classroom are being heard and supported from a multicultural perspective (Liu, 2005). In addition, purposeful striving to increase the number of counselor trainees and future professional counselors who are men could mean that clients will have a greater diversity of practitioners available to them in counseling spaces; yet again, we do not know if this is just anecdotally significant or statistically significant. An increase in diverse clinician representation may continue efforts to lessen the stigma of help-seeking by men (Evans, 2013; Parent, Hammer, Bradstreet, Schwartz, & Jobe, 2016; Wong, et al., 2017). Finally, this study might prompt counselor educators to interrogate their personal
beliefs about men, what it means to shift the gender balance of their programs, and what true role social justice and multiculturalism play in educating and training future professional counselors.

To particularize the scope of this current research, only the experiences of masters-level trainees who chose to identify as men (however they defined that) were explored, but future research studies will further investigate those experiences of diverse gender identities in counselor training. Because I sought to understand individual experiences through qualitative means, it was not intended to be generalizable to the broad population of graduate students in counseling. Still, I hope that the results of this study will inform counseling faculty in their processes of recruitment and retention of men students and that men students will see aspects of their lived experience reflected in participants’ words and the study’s overall themes.

Research Questions

There is one main question and three sub-questions guiding this study, including:

1) How do participants describe and make meaning of their gender identity and expression?
   a) How do participants perceive gender within their family and cultural communities?
   b) What role (if any) did the counseling program play in helping participants make meaning of their gender identity?
   c) What are the participants’ perspectives about gender as they train to be counselors?

Overview of Methodology

The methodology was guided by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, et al., 2009), which includes three elements: 1) the subjective accounts of participants’ personal experience, 2) a type of parallel hermeneutic process, referring to the researcher’s deliberate practice of making meaning from participants’ interpretations of their experiences (Osborn,
West, & Nance, 2017), and 3) how participants themselves make sense of their experiences (Finlay, 2011). Qualitative inquiry overall was best suited to address this study’s research questions and the attempt to understand the complexity of the man’s experience in the counselor training space, as well as to allow room for participants’ own structures of gender identity and related experiences to emerge. CIT participants who met the criteria of the research request were recruited through a purposive sampling process (Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). The study was bounded at one large public state university in the Midwest. The seven participants represent approximately 6% of the total number of CITs in this CACREP-accredited counseling program, including both Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling tracks, but comprise 25% of the current number of internship students, in which all are enrolled except one who recently graduated.

Participants were interviewed using a phenomenological, semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C). All interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom video conferencing software (zoom.us). Transcripts were created from the recorded interviews and produced by rev.com. After cleaning the transcripts for accuracy and adding back natural language disfluencies that were removed and nonverbal behaviors, the completed transcripts were sent to the participants for their approval and were confirmed as accurate prior to data analysis. All recordings were deleted according to IRB-approved procedures. The transcripts were carefully analyzed using IPA (Smith, et al., 2009), the process of which is further discussed in Chapter Three.
Definitions of Key Terminology

Embedded in this study are several terms or phrases explicitly defined or broadly discussed in the research literature, terms which are expanded upon in Chapter Two. From both a constructivist and social constructionist perspective, I do not adhere to objective operational definitions for the main topics under study given the qualitative nature of the project. However, it is useful to have orienting definitions for the reader; thus, I am employing the definitions below. Citations are provided when the definition comes directly from the researcher(s) who coined the term, or developed the concept, or where their explanation of the term should remain intact. The participants in this study may not specifically subscribe to the definitions that follow here and they will be encouraged to provide their own situated and contextual identities through the course of their revelations.

**Masculinity** is the broad expression of cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics of men and some women, such as aggressiveness, stoicism, (brute) physical strength, competition, power, logic, and control.

**“Multiple masculinities”** is a concept coined by RW Connell (1995) and describes a recognition that there is not only one way to express masculinity and that it can exist for an individual or across individuals in multiple manifestations.

**Manhood** – the process of gender development into adulthood by men. This can encompass the characteristics of masculinity, but expressed as a man, not as a woman.

**Contextual minority** – A contextual minority is someone who belongs to a dominant group in general society but becomes a temporary minority inside of a space where they
are only one or one of a few who appear to belong to the same group (e.g. a student who is a man in a classroom full of students who are women).

**Token minority** – A token minority is typically considered a representative of a socially-marginalized group inside a socially-dominant group (e.g., a lesbian in a room full of heterosexual people) where the socially-marginalized individual is asked to speak on behalf of their entire group or is targeted with questions or comments because of their association. In this study, men are a contextual minority in counselor training programs who may also experience tokenism in classroom and supervision spaces when they are asked to speak on behalf of all men, be expected to know everything about men’s thinking and behavior or be responsible for all men’s thinking and behavior. This tokenism can be the case especially for men of color, or men who identify as gay, differently abled, older, or another personal dimension of identity which further sets them apart from their classmates.

**Patriarchy** is a societal system of institutionalized sexism that assumes the superiority of men (hooks, 2000; hooks, 2015).

**Feminism** is a social movement toward equal rights for women. This movement has generational waves of social action to be further described in Chapter Two. Rawlings (1993) describes feminism as “… a philosophy [which] focuses on the social-political context of women’s lives and advocates social change as the means to improving women’s lives and mental well-being” (p. 90).
Sex is a complex concept rooted in biological genotypes and phenotypes, typically thought of in a binary, but which includes diverse internal and external physical characteristics.

Gender is also a complex concept which refers to an individual’s felt personal identity as well as their social performance of that identity (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Gender is uniquely personal, and is comprised of internal identity, external expression, individual perception, and conformity or disconformity to societal expectations. Disconformity troubles, disrupts, and rebels against conventionally accepted representations of how an individual should be and do their gender (Eagly & Wood, 2011).

Cisgender refers to the uncontested match between an individual’s personal gender identity and the sex they were assigned at birth.

Traditional gender binary – A binary signifies two, and in this study, it means gender as a man and a woman, rather than the full spectrum of gender identity which exists in society.

Atypical career choice – In workforce development, this concept describes men holding jobs or careers typically held by women (e.g., teacher, nurse, or counselor) and women holding jobs or careers typically held by men (e.g., engineer, mechanic, or firefighter). To make an atypical career choice, an individual is generally confronted with societal opinions, barriers, and challenges in getting, keeping, or being successful in the career.

Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and describes that as individuals, we hold multiple facets of personal identity, and that these facets interact uniquely in the various contexts in which an individual exists. Extensively utilized in
interdisciplinary academic spaces and now a term in the public lexicon, I use the concept of intersectionality here to provide the space for my participants to hold multiple identities and to describe how they express and protect these identities in their personal, academic, and professional environments.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter One served as an introduction and overview for the whole study, providing a brief description of the major content described more fully in subsequent chapters. Also included in Chapter One was the rationale for the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the definitions of key terminology. Chapter Two presents an in-depth review of the literature on men and masculinities in general, men as counselors, men as clients, men as professional helping trainees, men in atypical careers, the context of the counseling profession, as well as the conceptual and theoretical frameworks present in this study. Chapter Three provides an in-depth description of the methodology employed in this study including the selection of participants, the chosen interview method, the proposed data analysis, the strategies for trustworthiness, and my researcher subjectivity statement. Chapter Four reveals the findings of the study and presents the data from the participant interviews. Finally, Chapter Five concludes this project with a discussion of the data in relation to the research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework. It will include my conclusions, implications for the profession, and recommendations for counselor educators and future qualitative researchers on men as counselor trainees.
2. EXPLORATION OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

I covered extensive territory in this literature review as I explored each concept or context involved in the study through a synthesis of seminal and contemporary works in multiple fields of study and practice. As the review demonstrates, ideas about gender and masculinity are consistently and increasingly dynamic. They evolve over time and will continue to be redefined as knowledge and perceptions change. In this chapter I discuss (a) how these constructs in historical contexts are known; (b) how these constructs have changed; and (c) where research and clinical understanding of these topics are headed for future study and practice. In the following section, I provide a comprehensive discussion on the broad construct of masculinity and manhood, as well as a deeper exploration of the theoretical framework that provided a grounded nature to this research. Each section in the following review is directly related to the purpose of the present study and research questions. This chapter concludes with gaps in the literature to which this study attempts to respond, as well as evident trends on the topics at hand.

Literature Review Process Statement

I utilized academic research databases in the general literature search, such as: Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, PsychArticles, PsychInfo, ArticlesFirst, JSTOR, Science Direct, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, and Wiley Online Library. A sample of utilized Boolean search terms include individual or grouped words such as, masculinity, manhood, gender, counseling, counselor, professional counselor, male counselor, counselor-in-training, CIT, CACREP, feminist, feminism, multicultural, multicultural competencies, minority, contextual minority, token minority, diverse, intersectionality, atypical career choice, and multiple masculinities.
targeted and interdisciplinary literature search elicited articles from the following academic, peer-reviewed journals: *Sex Roles, Feminism & Psychology; Psychology of Women Quarterly; Gender & Society; Psychology of Men and Masculinity; Men and Masculinities; American Journal of Men’s Health; The Journal of Men’s Studies; Journal of Counseling & Development; Counselor Education and Supervision; Counseling and Values; Journal of Counselor Leadership and Advocacy; Journal of Humanistic Counseling; Journal of Professional Counseling; Practice, Theory and Research; Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development; Journal of Mental Health Counseling; Journal of School Counseling; Journal of College Counseling; The Arts in Psychotherapy; Theory and Society; Social Problems; Sociology; Journal of Personality and Social Psychology; Professional Psychology; Research and Practice; Psychological Review; Clinical Psychology Review; Journal of Counseling Psychology; Counselling Psychology Quarterly; British Journal of Health Psychology; The Counseling Psychologist; Journal of Clinical Psychology; American Psychologist; Psychological bulletin; The Humanistic Psychologist; Work, employment, and society; Gender, Work and Organization; Journal of Vocational Behavior; The Personnel and Guidance Journal; American Secondary Education; Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education; Harvard Educational Review; The Qualitative Report; Qualitative Research Journal; Constructivist foundations; Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling; Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology; Social Forces; AntiMatters; and The Professional Counselor. Additional literature sources included book chapters from research anthologies and academic textbooks, along with other sociological, psychological, and counseling-related texts by authors focused on feminist
theory, men and masculinity, counseling issues, and sociological foundations of gender and society.

**Review of Literature**

Since the 1970s, gender has been, and will likely continue to be, a topic under extensive study across the span of academic literature in many different contexts, such as, but not limited to, gender socialization patterns, personality traits, relationships, career development processes, and the fight for gender equity and equality. A sociological expert on gender studies, Risman (2004) and Risman and Davis (2013) have traced an intricate and complex history of the evolving study of biological sex and gender in the United States. In Risman’s (2004) view, there are four traditions in the social sciences research regarding gender: 1) individual sex differences; 2) the “social structure” of gender; 3) the social interaction and inequality of gender; and the currently conceptualized 4) “socially constructed stratification system” of gender (p. 430). The presence of sex hormones discovered by medical and biological researchers in the early 20th century drove intellectual inquiry on individual sex differences and their potential impact on the traits and behaviors of men and women. Risman (2004) stated,

> As long as women and men see themselves as different kinds of people, then women will be unlikely to compare their life options to those of men. Therein lies the power of gender. In a world where sexual anatomy is used to dichotomize human beings into types, the differentiation itself diffuses both claims to and expectations for gender equality. The social structure is not experienced as oppressive if men and women do not see themselves as similarly situated (p. 432).

In the psychological and sociological literature, O’Neil (1981) wrote about the “sex-role re-evaluation process” (p. 61) which can be tumultuous for both men and women in re-assessing their tasks, expectations, and aspirations. Pleck (1981) further studied the effects that dismantling the gender role structure was having on society through the Gender Role Strain Paradigm,
discussed further in this chapter. Bem (1981, 1985) published on Gender Schema Theory, studying the effects of early childhood gender socialization, and David and Brannon (1976) described the *Blueprint for Manhood*, providing the idealized image of masculinity that the authors asserted men have difficulty living up to. Each of these were instrumental in exploring and building knowledge on the distinctions between sex and gender, the arguments for and against the biological essentialism of sex, the social construction of gender, and the implications of masculinity and femininity on roles, relationships, expectations, and aspirations.

Explored in more detail later in this chapter, research on the implications of gender dynamics in the counseling profession, too, has grown and deepened for the practice of counseling clients (Englar-Carlson, 2006; Novak, Park, & Friedman, 2013), the process of counseling supervision (Degges-White, Colon, & Borzumato-Gainey, 2013; Doughty & Leddick, 2007; Fickling, Tangen, Graden, & Grays, 2019; MacKinnon, Bhatia, Sunderani, Affleck, and Smith, 2011; Paisley, 1994, Scher, 2005), career development in counseling leadership (Cognard-Black, 2012), and andragogical practices in counselor education (Evans, 2013).

Specific to the practice of counseling assessment, Hoffman (2001) conducted a review of the history of masculinity and femininity measurement by examining a selection of assessment instruments from the years 1936 to 2000. She charted the evolution of societal and psychological beliefs about gender and how the purpose and language of those instruments tended to perpetuate increasingly outdated gender role stereotypes even as society was recognizing that gender was much broader than defined by binary biological sex (O’Neil, 2008). Further, Hoffman stated that counselors have an important responsibility to investigate their own
knowledge and beliefs about gender when working with their clients, which influences and is
influenced by the choice of assessment instruments and interpretation of those assessment
results. Counselors should take particular care to not unduly influence clients to adopt their
understanding of gender, but instead to help clients develop their own relationship to personal
gender identity and expression (Hoffman, 2001).

Literature associated with this topic extensively explores multidimensional gender-related
constructs that are slowly evolving; however, scholarly works written three and four decades ago
(Farrell, 1974; Fasteau 1975; Stoltenberg, 1989; Tolson, 1977) could have been written in
contemporary times for the recognizable patterns of gender socialization and the constrictions
placed on men’s ability to freely explore their emotional content. Many profeminist men engaged
in very familiar discussions on what gender looked like in the United States at that time and
more broadly in Western culture, which indicates that much has not changed regarding socialized
gender roles and expectations. For example, to maintain the masculine ideal, men must
“…dissociate from all that is coded and stigmatized ‘female.’” Most of our choice making has to
do with disidentifying with women” (Stoltenberg, 1989, p. 165). However, the work of
profeminist men still did not go far enough in even trying to dismantle the systems and
institutions of the patriarchy for men. As Gloria Steinem wrote in the introduction of Fasteau’s
(1975) *The Male Machine*, “the most important, strategic lesson of feminism: that the power
relationships in our daily lives both reflect and create the political system at large, and therefore
one cannot be changed without the other” (Steinem, as cited in Fasteau, 1975, p. xii). Steinem
was writing here with an illustration of this power structure as she and one other high-powered
woman judge attended an intellectual dinner discussion with four influential men in various
positions of power. As the group finished each dinner course, Steinem and the judge
automatically began to help clear the plates and the men remained seated, oblivious to anything
other than the discussion they were engaged in. Both Steinem and the judge commented on the
ironic nature of a radical, world-changing, transformational topic about dismantling systems of
oppression and yet not noticing the institution of gender role socialization occurring right in front
of them. Steinem further commented that the privilege of intellectual abstraction is one that will
continually talk about the problem but never do anything about it. This applies to both men and
women as we continue reproducing the system we desire to tear down. This is but one example,
but as long as constructed gender role stereotypes continue being reinforced, men will be
distanced from healthy and supported expression of their feelings and women and other minority
groups will continue to be distanced from career and life aspirations for which they are otherwise
suited.

and Okun (2014) continue the call for a dismantling of the restrictive expectations on men and a
better balance of shared gender characteristics. More recent social events are certain to elicit
another peak in the exploration of gender constructs and their implications as evidenced through
the #MeToo movement, the broad expansion of gender identities and their protections or lack
thereof, and the current sociopolitical landscape (McCall, 2005; Tambe, 2018).

A Prelude

Historical biological and sociological essentialism engendered beliefs about immutable
sex-role differences between men and women and perpetuated this myth through enduring
stereotypes of the characteristics of men and women which translated to cognitive and affective
behaviors, roles, and responsibilities. Once broken down by scientific research studies, this insistence of sex-role differences became recognized instead as a deep pattern of constructed gender role socialization (Addis & Mahalik, 2003); thus, the possibilities emerged to deconstruct or change the pattern. In the following passages I focus on the shift toward gender role socialization as society continues to contend with this dynamic. I also provide a discussion on the development of feminism and how this movement has affected men, the many types and expressions of masculinity identified through sociological research, the influence of gender role socialization on men’s help-seeking behaviors and their career development choices, and finally, I will connect this large discussion to the place of men in counselor in training programs and the counseling profession.

**Historical Background and Situated Viewpoints**

The nexus of the women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s provided a fulcrum by which to also have more honest, open dialogue on the implications of gender for men, from a definitional perspective of sex roles and gender expression (Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010; O’Neil, 1981, 1982; Pleck, 1981, 1995; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993), from a fledgling antisexist and profeminist standpoint (Farrell, 1974; Fasteau, 1975; Okun, 2014; Tolson, 1977; Stoltenberg, 1989), or from an antifeminist drive to reclaim and secure traditional manhood (Lin, 2017; van Wormer, 2008), as we see in many spaces today.

While the feminist movement engaged in liberation for women from restrictive notions of gender and gender roles, the feminist mission ultimately offered freedom for men from the strictures of gender role socialization and confinement as well, if they wanted it, and many sought this from the 1970s onward. By the mid-1990s and the height of the third wave of
feminism, a greater understanding of men's gender role strain (Pleck, 1981, 1995) and gender role conflict (O’Neil, 1981, 1982), and the problems men were experiencing in trying to live up to society's expectations of what a man should do and who a man should be emerged in academia and mainstream society. Backlash (Stoltenberg, 1989) against the inclusion of men in expanding definitions of gender due to the threat against traditional masculinity, as well as continued antifeminist backlash (Lin, 2017) for those women seeking equality, still dominates contemporary societal discourse, as described later in this chapter.

**The Feminist Movement and Its Relevance for Men**

From its inception, the feminist movement proved to be transformational in rewriting the rules for who and what a woman could be in the United States and around the world. While it began as a liberation effort against the existing institutional and societal barriers that privileged men, feminism also provided a unique opportunity for men to also liberate themselves from these structures, a somewhat short-lived men’s liberation movement. An exhaustive discussion on the vast and complex history of feminism in the United States and around the world is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but as it relates to this project, I provided a brief outline below of the five identified waves of feminism beginning with women’s struggle to vote and achieve property to how feminism is currently being shaped by social media and identity politics. Connell’s (2014) view, holds that,

Feminism has, to a certain extent, functioned as a guarantor of critical studies of men and masculinities. Some practitioners, acknowledging the patriarchal character of academic life in general, emphasize that their analysis is “pro-feminist”. In applied fields such as anti-violence work, dealing with rape and domestic violence, scrupulous men’s groups take care to work in concert with women’s groups and acknowledge the needs and fears of victimized women (p. 6).
Additionally, the consciousness-raising group model provided by women in the 1960s and 1970s created a space for men to consider that gender socialization patterns were also damaging to them (Farrell, 1974; Fasteau, 1975; Sawyer, 1970; Stoltenberg, 1989).

**Feminist Philosophy and Generational Waves in the United States**

A leading feminist scholar, Enns (1992) offered a historical lens on four main types of feminist philosophy – liberal, cultural, radical, and socialist – that played out within several generational waves of feminism – first, second, third, fourth, and a possible fifth. Liberal feminist philosophy, also considered to be mainstream feminism, is driven by “the ideals of human dignity, equality, self-fulfillment, autonomy, and rationality, and [liberal feminists] have sought to reform existing legal and political systems that limit individual freedom” (p. 454). Liberal feminism fueled the “first wave” of feminist sociopolitical action in the United States. The major historical events and issues in this period included the fight for women’s suffrage, attaining property rights, gaining reproductive rights, establishing a powerful voice, and dislodging out from under the variety of financial, political, familial, and social systemic oppressions. It was in this wave and within this liberal feminist philosophy that affirmative action was created, of which white women have benefited the most (Crenshaw, 2006). The first wave of feminism also included the philosophy of radical feminism which sought to destroy gender as a “meaningful social category” as well as the biological argument of gender’s origin due to their imposition of limitations (Echols, 1984, p. 50).

Donovan (1992) as cited in Enns (1992) situated the cultural feminist philosophy “as based on altruistic, cooperative, pacifistic, life-affirming values, and have promoted the notion that women have an obligation to better the world through social reform” (p. 455). This group
held that if women were given their full power in society, then “violence and aggression can be overcome, and the strengths of gentleness, harmony, and peace can be realized” (p. 455). Taylor and Rupp (1993) considered cultural feminism to be the extinguishment of the principals of radical feminism. Where radical feminism wanted to tear down the walls of biological sex differences and claim greater control of women’s bodies and agency, cultural feminists wanted to hold them up and encourage a “revaluation of women’s strengths (and an) infusion of society” with these values (Enns, 1992, p. 454).

The “second wave” of feminism, during the countercultural movement of the 1960s, saw a continuation of these philosophical debates as well as calls for broader social change on many fronts, such as in the antiwar movement and a greater recognition of social and economic inequality for marginalized groups. Radical feminists worked harder on breaking down the patriarchy, a structure which was emblematic of “the most fundamental and pervasive form of oppression … characterized by male dominance, competition, and heterosexism” (Enns, 1992, p. 455). They did this through similar political activism as in the first wave, but also through separatism, the creation of women-only communities and health centers that fostered “…women's relationships, achievements, culture, spirituality, and diversity” (Enns, 1992, p. 455) inside a culture of egalitarianism. Demonstrating the variety of approaches toward feminism and taking an early intersectional approach in the 1970s, the Combahee River Collective embodied radical, socialist, and lesbian political feminism and publicly criticized the racism in the women’s movement and the separatism from men by women in the fight for women’s rights. The Collective wrote “A Black Feminist Statement” in 1977 which said, in part:

Although we are feminists and lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive black men and do not advocate the fractionalization that white women who are separatists demand.
Our situation as black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors. We struggle together with black men against racism, while we also struggle with black men about sexism (as cited in Freedman, 2007, p. 327).

Radical feminism also created the iconic phrase “the personal is political”, ultimately unclaimed by any one scholar or activist, to mean that issues in women’s everyday lives were fodder for public policy and thus needed to be focused on as such in the fight to regain control and decision-making power. Major actions that took place during this time period included consciousness-raising, bra-burning, marches, rallies, demonstrations, sit-ins, scholarly and academic activism, continued lobbying efforts for reproductive rights, the identification of the “glass ceiling and the “sticky floor” for women and other minorities in the workplace, and the valiant attempts to overcome those barriers. The second wave, more than the first, grappled with “how to combine some version of feminist politics with the lived messiness of real life” (Braithwaite, 2002, p. 336). The “third wave” of feminism in the United States represented a shift away from more structured representations of feminism and was characterized by increased consciousness raising efforts, further politicization, and an embodiment of personal definitions of feminism.

Baumgarder and Richards (2000) as cited in Braithwaite (2002) stated that “The fact that feminism is no longer limited to arenas where we expect to see it – NOW, Ms., women’s studies, and red-suited congresswomen – perhaps that means that young women today have really reaped what feminism has sown” (p. 340). The third wave brought activism in underground movements like women’s entry into the punk rock scene, which, given its countercultural ethos was contradictorily centered on men. *Riot grrls* like Kathleen Hanna adopted punk’s do-it-yourself
(DIY) ethos and created a whole scene for women. Due to the attempted erasure by the United States government of the AIDS epidemic, the third wave feminists included more of a focus on gay and lesbian rights. The third wave involved an expansion of efforts to be inclusive of marginalized groups, recognizing more fully that the access feminists fought for in the second wave benefited white women significantly more than women of color. Continued affirmative action policies underscored that for white women, inclusion in work and academic spaces was a civil right, but for people of color, it was to meet a quota (Hite, 2006; Roberts & Smith, 2002).

Black women and other women of color found a stronger voice in the second and third waves; however, these women were still not on equal footing with white women in a movement that purported to champion equality. Educational and employment opportunities, independent financial growth and stability, and affordable childcare services were not made available to non-white women at the same pace as they were for white women. As such, many black women rejected mainstream feminism in favor of “black feminism” focused on issues central to black women, and “womanism”, a term coined by Alice Walker to describe the striving for an inclusive and equitable relationship for people of color, as well as deeper relationships with the natural world and spiritual dimensions (Ogunyemi, 1985). More specifically, Ogunyemi (1985) stated that “Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom” (p. 72). In a qualitative study following the 2017 Women’s March involving 20 interviews of women of color, Brewer and Dundes (2018) found that mainstream feminism is still failing non-white women through the lack of inclusion which creates erasure of very specific issues affecting Black, Latina, and indigenous women.
Baumgardner and Richards (2003) stated that, “the gains of feminism have been measured by our acceptance in privileged white male spaces” (p. 5) and described that the shift from seeking access to seeking equality proved more difficult between the second and third waves given ever-changing concerns, capitalistic comfort, and societal stigma on feminist philosophies and values. Sawyer (1970) commented that “The women’s liberation movement has stressed that women are looking for a better model for human behavior than has so far been created” (p. 33). This transition between the traditional submissiveness of women through periods of intensive activism and to the growing freedom from such traditional oppression created a dissonance of identities and an ideological separation in mainstream life between the activism of the 1960s and a growing complicity just decades later as more women enjoyed access to previously-unavailable spaces and their children grew up in a world with more options. Due to rapid social progress through the 1980s and 1990s, women needed to assert “feminism” as an identity less often than they used to in order to fight for, or get, what they wanted, but a consequence of progress meant that fewer younger women knew the history of the feminist fight for equality (Pierce, 1998). During this time, too, sexual harassment became a national issue as a result of Anita Hill’s claims against Clarence Thomas and the punishment she received in the press for threatening the credibility and longevity of his career (Walker, 1992). The uncovering of sexual harassment, violence against women, the continued politicization of the woman’s body, and the continued lack of consistent legislative protections have continued into what is now considered the fourth wave of feminism (Snyder, 2008).

The fourth wave had no clear starting point but is best estimated at the turn of the current century (Aronson, 2003; McCall, 2005; Snyder, 2008). This wave is marked with an increasing
focus on intersectionality, women’s bodies and what they can do with them, and protecting women against violence. In the fourth wave was the advent of social media, a completely new platform upon which to form communities of like-minded thinkers, activists, and information-seekers. This also provided a very large stage for local activism to become national activism and to galvanize support for a myriad of interests. #MeToo and #TimesUp arose from this new medium. Tambe (2018) asserted that together with the fourth wave is a potential fifth wave, with no clear date of onset. This fifth wave may bring with it a new kind of feminism, one comprised of a more inclusive philosophy of gender, and a renewed discussion about who can call themselves a feminist (Tambe, 2018).

**Profeminist Men**

While sympathetic men were beginning their own form of consciousness-raising during the second and third waves of feminism, they were not supported at that time in calling themselves feminists (hooks, 1989); yet, Steinem commented that “The goals of the feminist revolution cannot be achieved without a humanization of both sex roles” (as cited in Fasteau, 1975, p. xv). Similarly, Sawyer (1970) asserted that “Male liberation calls for men to free themselves of the sex role stereotypes that limit their ability to be human” (p. 32). Counter to the cultural feminist philosophy of the first and second waves, a renewed sense of action against men and the institutional structures that men built to sustain themselves was underway (Brooks, 2010; Farrell, 1974; Tolson, 1977). hooks (1989) described this as,

> In the early stages of contemporary feminist movement, labeling men “the enemy” or “male chauvinist pigs” was perhaps an effective way for women to begin making the critical separation that would enable rebellion to begin – rebellion against patriarchy, rebellion against male domination (p. 127).
Despite the mixed reception of the men’s liberation movement, men’s groups began to form in the 1970s as spaces for men to gather and process what feminism was uncovering (Farrell, 1974; Fasteau, 1975; Franklin, 2007; Kimmel, 1987; Okun, 2014; Tolson, 1977; Stoltenberg, 1989). Annual conferences grew out of this practice where new understandings about men, women, and broader gender issues could be discussed (Okun, 2014; Stoltenberg, 1989). Books were written from this fresh freedom to reject hegemonic masculinity and express rage against the many forms of violence that men routinely perpetrated against women (Stoltenberg, 1989). Profeminist organizations served to bring men together, give space for their voices (Okun, 2014), and learn how to be allies to women. The American Psychological Association’s Division 51, the Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinities (http://division51.net/about/governance/history-of-division-51/), was created in 1995 and continues to focus on men and masculinity together with feminism and challenging gender inequality (Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010). Even with the galvanizing force of 1970s activism, Kimmel still lamented two decades later about the seeming inability for men to be considered feminist.

Why can’t men do feminism, or at least be seen to support feminism? After all, feminism provides both men and women with an extraordinarily powerful analytic prism through which to understand their lives, and a political and moral imperative to transform the unequal conditions of those relationships (Kimmel, 1998, p. 60).

In addition to these examples of men acting in support of feminism and women’s rights, men are also connected through their backlash to the feminist movement from antifeminist groups which include both men and women (Blais & Dupuis-Deri, 2012; Lin, 2017; VanWormer, 2008).
Sexism

Just as women were and continue to be oppressed by men in many contexts, so too were they oppressed by other women holding to the patriarchal ideal. A prominent example of this was the backlash to the women’s movement by Phyllis Schlafly, an outspoken proponent of conservative values who helped block the Equal Rights Amendment in the early 1980s, a measure that has never since achieved true momentum in the support of equal rights for women in the workplace. Schlafly’s primary reaction to the women’s movement centered on the presence and voices of radical lesbian feminists and the perception that conservative women would be forced to change their values and morals should society continue to progress toward acceptance of marginalized groups (MacKinnon, 1983).

Women also held men to the ideal of masculinity which prescribed their being and doing according to society’s ingrained system of patriarchy (Risman, 2004; Walby, 1989). This ideal image and practice of manhood prescribed that men be both the stoic protectors as well as emotionally expressive as if they are beings with attainment of these skills on demand. However, where women imbued a contradiction of expected behavior and emotionality on men, other men are much more mutually exclusive about what manhood is and should be (David & Brannon, 1976; Farrell, 1974; Fasteau, 1975; O’Neil, 1982; Sawyer, 1970). Adherence to these are perhaps the more brutal and victimizing expectations, for they leave no real room for individuality and authenticity, only public performances of manliness which can cause extreme internal stress and fatigue (Burkley, Wong, & Bell, 2016). These expectations include the rule that men should deal with their emotions through feats of physical strength, pure logic and rationality, or abject suppression, rather than through other forms of processing offered by a mental health
professional. When disallowed to be expressed in a healthy manner, these suppressed feelings and emotions may result in damaging behaviors toward themselves and others (O’Neil, 1981).

Perhaps unexpectedly, sexism as a phenomenon also has harmful effects on men. Defined by O’Neil (1981), sexism is “any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates, restricts, or discriminates against a person or group because of their sex, gender role, or sexual preference” (p.62). In a meta analyses study, Wong, et al. (2017) compared 19,453 participants across 78 samples on their conformity to masculine norms as related to positive and negative mental health outcomes and psychological help-seeking. The authors found that the specific masculine norm of power over women was “consistently and unfavorably associated with mental health-related outcomes” (p. 88). Further, this norm related most closely to sexism. Authors stated that this finding “underscores the idea that sexism is not merely a social injustice, but also has deleterious mental health-related consequences for those who embrace such attitudes” (pp. 88-89).

An ethnographic study by Lin (2017) of antifeminists in an online group called “Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)” highlighted the perceived safety of the online environment as a platform to express their views of “gynocentrism” without fear of public recrimination. Gynocentrism, in direct comparison to androcentrism, is described as having a woman or feminist focus. The members of this group were exclusively men and mostly white, middle class, and were from North America and Europe. From a comment by a participant, Lin (2017) discovered that a member of MGTOW journeys through four levels in this group:

1) A man is aware that women use “the government, courts and men’s desire to reproduce” as devices to manipulate him psychologically, but believes marriage is worth the risk. This man is referred to as the Purple Pill; 2) A man only believes in short-term relationships, but abstains from marriage, long-term relationships and cohabitation; 3) A
man abstains from dating and limits his interactions with women; and 4) A man limits his interactions with the state and society (p. 19).

The group under study by Lin (2017) is but one of dozens online. Mantilla (2013) additionally conceptualized a phenomenon she called “gendertrolling” which is similar to the behaviors of the group noted above. Mantilla identified several features of gendertrolling behavior:

(a) participation often involved a concerted effort from numerous people; (b) inclusion of gender-based insults and highly offensive pejoratives in their comments; (c) the use of vicious language, most commonly called “hatespeech”; (d) speech and actions involving credible threats of assault, injury, or death to the person’s offline/real life; (e) a long-term span of attacks; and (f) inspired by women speaking out on important issues related to women (pp. 564-565).

While under study decades before the online groups had their unique platform, Bem (1983) shared her Gender Schema Theory scholarship with implications for children and the different scripts parents might use to counteract society’s sex role typing. One of these alternatives was called a “sexism schema”, which the feminist parent might use to engage children in critical thinking about sexist effects in society. In Bem’s words, the sexism schema was a “coherent and organized understanding of the historical roots and the contemporaneous consequences of sex discrimination, that they will truly be able to comprehend why the sexes appear to be so different in our society” (1983, p. 615). This type of schema allowed those who held it to become critical of role-typed behavior and operate from an internal compass rather than a societal expectation. Sexism is therefore learned, a product of the overemphasis placed on gender role socialization and the enaction of power and control.

Gender Role Socialization

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971) described that the learning process for children involves intricate, yet often invisible observations and applications of socially acceptable
behaviors inside and outside the home, shaped by the consequences established by trusted parents, siblings, caregivers, and later reinforced by peers and external authority figures (Stockard, 2001). One of those early learning domains is focused on gender and what it means. Overt and covert behaviors, implicit and explicit messages, and explicit rewards and punishments (Bem, 1981) from important others provide very strict ideas about how men and boys can embody and express masculinity without fear of reproach by others (Burkley, Wong, & Bell, 2016; Vandello & Boson, 2013). Very early in life, young boys learn “patriarchal language” (Tolson, 1977) and what it means to work, to provide for the family, and how to operate in the world as a man.

Because of the women’s movement and the ongoing fight for equal rights, as well as the propensity for women to seek power in the image of men, women have more freedom in U.S. society to express both femininity and masculinity at given times, such as choosing more masculine clothing or demonstrating their independence from men by learning how to change a tire, fix a sink, or engage in other typically masculine chores and tasks in daily life. Men, by contrast, do not have as much freedom to dress in feminine clothing, care for children, decorate a home, cook and bake, or express their feelings, unless they do so with full knowledge of the potential social consequences from other men and women, and still act despite this. It takes a considerable amount of security and confidence in one’s sense of self to resist society’s expectations of what one should be, do, and say. The modeling that we learn as children is strongly rooted in the socially accepted patterns and routines embraced by our parents and early caregivers (Englar-Carlson, 2006).
Bem (1981) believed that the process of sex typing, or gender role socialization, was universally practiced, even though the specific details may look different from society to society. These lessons are situated in communities defined not only by family structure and gender, but also by race, socioeconomic status, education, politics, religion, and geography. More traditional or conservative families will typically embrace more traditional structures of thought and behavior, and more liberal families will typically embrace more liberal responses to a stimulus. These are not mutually exclusive ideas, and patterns of response will be based on the phenomenon, the positionality of the family, and the family’s willingness to act against traditional modes of behavior.

As a process, Social Learning Theory is integral in the adoption of this language and practice through early observation and modeling, and it is reinforced and replicated in social, academic, and workspaces. The positive consequences of reproducing this system is harmony and acceptance. The negative consequences of not reproducing this system, either by choice or by nature, may include ridicule and rejection (Bandura, 1971). Appearing or performing less masculine than one is “supposed to be,” thus threatening the masculine ideal, is usually what triggers this form of rejection. Vandello and Boson (2013) stated that, "A healthy masculine identity can only be developed if boys sufficiently dis-identify with the female caregiver and the feminine qualities that she represents" (p.102). The authors characterize this as the antifemininity mandate. The implication, of course, is that if the young boy takes on too many of his mother’s assumed characteristics, he will be shunned by other boys and looked down on by men that he may look up to or idealize for the very characteristics he himself is expected to possess. This experience troubles his internal sense of himself and the way he interacts with the external world.
Gender Schema Theory

From a cognitive perspective, most healthy individuals possess an ability to process information according to established schema (Bem, 1981). Schematic processes are generalized in patterns but are specific in stereotypical content; that is, readily identifiable information is encoded quickly. Unless there is traumatic brain injury or the brain is otherwise negatively affected, individuals should be ready to receive new information, sort it into pre-established categories, make judgments related to this information, and engage in a decision-making process. What an individual perceives and what actions they take will reflect the inherent biases and stereotypes built into the scheme. Bem (1981, 1983, 1985) applied this process to gender and described that the process of sex typing creates a gender schema from which men and women alike perpetuate the learned gender socialization structure, such as that of masculinity.

Men, Masculinity, and Manhood

During the height of the women’s movement, Farrell (1974) was concerned with how to make sense of masculinity within the framework of deconstructing gender. To provide context for the discussion of dismantling prevailing structures of masculinity, he described the formation of what he called The Masculine Value System:

a series of characteristics and behaviors which men more than women in our society are socialized to adopt, especially outside of the home environment. Men are not born with masculine values. They learn them from both men and women. But one lesson derived from the teaching is that it is more permissible for a man to lead and dominate than a woman. Masculine values become society's values in the public sphere (p.15).

This adoption of the masculine value system by many in society showed up prominently in the workplace where assertiveness, leadership, risk-taking, and competition were favored. Women who fought for equal rights entered the workforce with gusto, but often did so in high-
powered business suits with an air of aggressiveness to attain and maintain the same playing field as men. Farrell (1974) further described these values as: being a good talker and articulator, being logical, engaging in visible conflict and adventure, attaining status in work and wealth, being self-confident, being a quick and resolute decision-maker, striving actively for power, being involved or educated in politics or business, exacting concrete results and tangible rewards; and being invulnerable (p. 22).

In Williams’ (1992) theory development on the “glass escalator” effect (i.e., men would advance to leadership positions more rapidly than their woman counterparts with equal education, training, and status), she found the desire for men’s leadership qualities seemed to increase inside women-concentrated occupations. Exceptions to this phenomenon occurred in some teaching positions of young children in which men were barred for the fear that they would be inappropriate with children, the assumption being that some women might not also be inappropriate, a misconception that dissolves with every news story like that of Mary Kay Letourneau (Cognard-Black, 2012; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Williams, 1992). Williams (2013) revisited her theory with new knowledge of limitations on the old version, namely that of intersectional erasure and a lack of flexibility regarding rapidly changing work environments. The updated theory better connects to the “sticky floor” phenomenon discussed earlier that primarily affects people of color in the workplace.

The Blueprint for Manhood

Like Farrell’s masculine values (1974, p. 15), David and Brannon’s (1976) blueprint for manhood explicated implicit and explicit ideals for embodying and expressing one’s masculinity and manhood. This blueprint included four elements: 1) no sissy stuff; 2) the big wheel; 3) the
sturdy oak; and 4) give 'em hell. *No sissy stuff* expects that men will not exhibit femininity of any kind. *The big wheel* is the expectation of the automatic and continual striving for status and respect. *The sturdy oak* is the expectation of stalwart strength and support. *Give 'em hell* is the expectation of actively seeking action, aggression, and adventure. Though David and Brannon (1976) did not expect that a man would live up to all of these, they were created as the ideal image of what a man could be and for which he should strive (Kahn, 2009). Fasteau (1975) called this archetype, *the male machine* – not real, but the ideal. Reinforcing this still, Brooks and Silverstein (1995) stated that the blueprint was the expectation of *normative masculinity* – the “values, attitudes, and behaviors that are learned by most men during the course of their socialization within U.S. culture” (p. 281). Again, these images of manly perfection were not only upheld by men, but women as well, so much so that assessing the factors embedded in this system of masculinity became fairly easy to do.

**Assessing Masculinity**

The constructs described in the passages below are often assessed through attitudinal and self-concept ratings by assessments such as the flawed yet still in use, Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974). Much of the critique of the continuing use of this assessment centers on its maintenance of the essentialist differences between men and women (Hoffman & Borders, 2001). Other assessments include the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) (O’Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman, 1986), the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (MGRSS) (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987), and a much more contemporary assessment called the Traditional Masculinity and Femininity scale (Kachel, Steffens, & Niedlich, 2016) which builds on past inventories of its kind.
Masculine ideology. Pleck, Sonenstein, and Ku (1993) stated that “Masculine ideology refers to beliefs about the importance of men adhering to culturally defined standards for male behavior” (p.308). This concept is connected to both Bem’s (1981) gender schema theory where commonly believed practices are encoded in the brain, and that of social constructionism, the more recent understanding that those encodings can evolve with updated language as humans can learn new affective and behavioral patterns (Gergen, 1985). Masculine ideology is typically assessed through attitudinal ratings that get at the essence of the “endorsement and internalization of cultural belief systems about masculinity and male gender, rooted in the structural relationship between the two sexes” (Pleck, et al., 1993, p. 310). There is a correlation between adherence to this masculine ideology and the consequences of not living up to it. Men’s self-concept is often tied to how well they meet these strict standards.

Trait masculinity. Pleck et al., (1993) defined trait masculinity in personality psychology as, “the essence of masculinity is being masculine” (p.309). Comparing trait masculinity to masculine ideology, the former refers to the “having of” masculine traits and the latter the “should having” of masculine traits. As a paradox, due to the patriarchal system in Western society, power is one of the privileges that men are automatically afforded; however, men rarely feel that they realistically have this power and instead feel a lack of power (Pleck, 1974, 1976, 1982).

Gender role strain. Another contribution by Pleck (1981, 1995) to the conceptualization of socially constructed notions of masculinity is that of gender role strain. “The strain model postulates that cultural standards for masculinity exist, and that socialization encourages men to
attempt to live up to them” (Pleck, et al., 1993, p.310). Pleck further identified three kinds of negative outcomes due to the pressure of this strain:

(a) long-term failure to fulfill male role expectations, with the continuing disjuncture between expectations and one’s characteristics leading to low self-esteem and other negative psychological consequences; (b) successful fulfillment of male role expectations, but only through a traumatic socialization process with long-term negative side effects; and (c) successful fulfillment of male role expectations, but with negative consequences because the prescribed characteristics (e.g. low family participation) have inherent negative side effects (p.310).

**Gender role stress.** Focused on medical and mental health, Eisler and Blalock (1991) introduced a construct called *gender role stress*, which implicates traditional masculinity traits as potentially problematic in the overall health and wellbeing of men. The authors stated that, “part of the social program of masculinity includes repertoires of aggression and combativeness as socially sanctioned male coping styles” (Eisler & Blalock, 1991, p. 48). Furthering Pleck’s (1981) idea that masculinity is socially constructed rather than biological, Eisler and Blalock (1991) assert that there is no essentialist basis for the traditional expressions of masculinity, such as aggression, competition, control, and dominance, yet these are maintained by social expectations and the desire for peer acceptance. They are careful to state that these characteristics are not inherently negative and may in fact be adaptive in many situations for both men and women who embody them. “The social contingencies that reward masculine attitudes and behaviors while punishing nonmasculine (e.g., feminine) attitudes and behaviors result in the development of masculine gender role cognitive schemata in all men” (Eisler & Blalock, 1991, p. 49). The pressure to always perform these traditional masculine characteristics lends itself to a restriction in the range of coping strategies available to men contending with stress, which may result in unhealthy or maladaptive patterns of behavior. This has clear implications for mental
health and the help-seeking behaviors of men. The authors state that men will rarely turn up to counseling services presenting explicit concerns about their gender role adherence, but they will more often present with concerns about substance abuse, anger, work conflicts, and interpersonal stress, issues that are diagnosed at higher rates for men than for women.

**Gender role conflict.** This construct originated in the work of O’Neil, et al. (1986) and was included in over 200 empirical studies by 2005. Mintz and O’Neil (1990) described *gender role conflict* or *gender role strain* as “terms that have been used to describe the detrimental consequences of gender roles (e.g., restrictive emotionality) either for the person holding them or for those associated with this person” (p. 381). Gender Role Conflict (GRC) has four elements; (a) restrictive emotionality (RE); (b) restrictive affectionate behavior between men (RABBM); (c) success, power, and competition (SPC); and (d) conflict between work and family relations (CBWFR; O'Neil et al., 1986).

**Gender role conflict scale.** O’Neil, et al. (1986) conducted an initial validation study of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) with 527 college men. This study affirmed the four factors listed above which underscored the construction and utility of the GRCS to assess for gender-role conflict. Reliability and validity psychometrics were strong and sustained over a four-week test-retest period. The authors stated that additional research on the GRCS would benefit from more diverse populations such as older men and men of color, but also on the “negative effects of gender role conflict on men, women, and children” (p. 349). Vogel, Wester, Hammer, and Downing-Matibag’s (2014) study asserted that RE and RABBM were most closely associated with difficulties related to men’s help-seeking behaviors. In a 2008 review of 231 empirical articles featuring use of the GRCS, O’Neil confirmed its use as a psychometrically-
sound instrument to assess for gender role conflict and re-asserted that GRC is significantly related to men’s anxieties, stress, interpersonal problems, and relational problems and should thus be of particular importance to helping professionals (O’Neil, 2008).

**Masculinities versus Masculinity**

The concept of multiple masculinities shifts the conversation away from only one definition of manhood or one way to be a man, but it is much more nuanced in that its origin was developed in experiences of privilege and power enacted against gay men (Addis & Cohane, 2005; Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). “The idea of a hierarchy of masculinities grew directly out of homosexual men’s experience with violence and prejudice from straight men. The concept of homophobia originated in the 1970s and was already being attributed to the conventional male role” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 831). Below are several examples of these masculinities, which can be interpreted in the view of the reader depending on multiple contexts in which they exist. Connell (2014) asserts that, “We study masculinities because gender is one of the main structures of the human world … gender inequalities are fundamental issues of social justice … because patterns of masculinity are relevant to happiness, health, and even to human survival …” (p. 5). Those masculinities described here are precarious, contingent, toxic, complicit, hegemonic, subordinate, corporate, and caring. These can refer to behaviors, characteristics, or perceptions of the broad concept of masculinity and are contextually based.

**Precarious.** Vandello & Boson (2013) identified the concept of *precarious manhood* which is hard won and easily lost, elusive, requires achieved status, and is confirmed by others through demonstrations of proof. “A single feminine or unmanly act can temporarily reverse a
man's gender status regardless of how many times he has proven it” (Vandello & Boson, 2013, p.103). It is possible to restore, but it takes time and effort.

**Contingent.** In the process of developing and validating their Masculinity Contingency Scale (MCS), Burkley, Wong, and Bell (2016) proposed and defined the construct of *masculinity contingency* “as the degree to which a man’s self-worth is derived from his sense of masculinity” (p. 113). This is juxtaposed with the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) (O’Neil & Renzulli, 2013; O’Neil, et al., 1986) and the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI) (Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2009) discussed in the passages above whereby the MCS focuses on the importance of masculinity on a man’s intrinsic sense of self rather than the expression of that sense of self through behavior. Burkley, et al. (2016) concentrated on the structure of masculinities (the “why”) rather than the previously researched behaviors (the “what”) of masculinities. The exploratory factor analysis phase of the study revealed that the 10 scale items loaded on two latent factors: MCS-Boost and MCS-Threat defined by the authors as, “*contingency threat* refers to decreases in self-esteem in response to negative domain outcomes, whereas *contingency boost* refers to increases in self-esteem in response to positive domain outcomes” (Burkley, et al., p.115). The norm groups in all four phases of the research study involved undergraduate men who received class credit in a psychology program at a large university in the Southwestern United States, so the scope of generalizability is limited by age and years of education, as well as by race/ethnicity, given that the samples were disproportionately white. Based on the final two phases of the study, the authors found that the scale and subscale demonstrated strong reliability and validity psychometrics. The clinical relevance of this study centered on the idea that a man whose self-worth is only contingent on his
masculinity (vs. other cultural identities) would be more negatively impacted by a masculinity threat than a man whose self-worth is contingent on masculinity -and- other identities such as academics and family. For most men, self-esteem is likely to be boosted by a confirmation of their masculinity than it is to be threatened by a lack of masculinity. Men whose masculinity is threatened are more likely to try and defend it through sexist and homophobic tendencies. Men whose self-worth is contingent on their masculinity are more likely to exhibit several social and personal problems (Burkley, et al., 2016). This perspective encourages researchers to take a culturally inclusive and critical look at structures of masculinity rather than simply the content of masculine behaviors.

**Toxic.** Largely a colloquial term which refers to men who embody a masculinity that damages those around them (Kimmel & Wade, 2018), specifically women, Kupers (2005) explored this concept in relation to men in prison and experiences of treatment resistance. He defined the term as “the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence” (p. 704). Kupers (2005) cautioned against painting men with a broad brush of toxic masculinity as men’s expression of their manhood is nuanced and complex and include many more positive aspects than negative. Related to his specific population, Kupers (2005) stated that behaviors which appear as toxic might include, “a tough-guy posture, outbursts of temper, and the tendency to act out troubling impulses rather than to introspect about their meanings and ramifications” (p. 717), qualities he said are overrepresented among prison inmates.

**Hegemonic.** Connell (1990) defined hegemonic masculinity as the "culturally idealized form of masculine character" (p. 83) that emphasized "the connecting of masculinity to
toughness and competitiveness" as well as "the subordination of women" and the "marginalization of gay men" (p. 94).

**Subordinate, corporate, complicit, and caring.** Connected to the definition of hegemonic masculinity are types of masculinity that come up against it, namely *subordinate, corporate or “soft,” complicit, and caring*. Elliott (2016) describes these terms as a rejection of domination, and rather that they are values of positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality (p. 2). These values contribute to a complex view of manhood, but also provide a glimpse into the internal struggle some men may experience as they attempt to fit into multiple spaces and be accepted by other men.

**Diverse Masculinities**

Literature about the experiences of men of color were previously insubstantial but this knowledge base has been increasing in recent years such as in the intentional and generational transmission of values from African American fathers to sons, African American men’s parenting practices, gay men’s experiences of masculinity, the development of African American boys and young men, and Latino feminist masculinities and intersectionality (Doyle, Clark, Cryer-Coupet, Nebbitt, Goldston, Estroff, & Magan, 2015; Doyle, Magan, Cryer-Coupet, Goldston, & Estroff, 2016; Gaylord-Harden, Barbarin, Tolan, & Murry, 2018; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Johnson, 2016; Lodge & Umberson, 2013; Murgó, Huynh, Lee, & Chrisler, 2017; Robinson, 2011; Smiler, 2014).

**Men and Mental Health**

Addis and Mahalik (2003) found through an extensive literature review of three decades of empirical research on the frequency of help-seeking for medical health, mental health, and
substance abuse treatment that men typically report mental and medical distress and seek professional help at lower rates than do women, despite the presence of distressing symptoms and the actual need to seek help. They argue that socialization, rather than individual differences, accounts for this disparity; specifically, how “both the socialization and the social construction of masculinity transact with the social psychology of giving and receiving help” (p. 12). The authors posit five social-psychological processes that influence men in some form or fashion when considering help-seeking: 1) Is the problem “normal”?; 2) Is the problem a central part of me?; 3) Will I have the opportunity to reciprocate?; 4) How will others react if I seek help?; and 5) What can I lose if I ask for help? (pp. 10-11). Sierra Hernandez, Han, Oliffe, and Ogrodniczuk (2014) tested these processes in a qualitative sample of 13 men seeking outpatient treatment for depression. The authors found that participants “consistently endorsed” (p. 352) these processes, which reveals the added deliberative pressure on men in their decision-making in whether to seek help, complicated by the symptoms of the potential or diagnosed mental disorder they are also experiencing. The most immediate problem with the lower rates of help-seeking relate to the health implications of men who keep concerns to themselves, in that major problems may manifest from suppression of initially minor concerns.

**Men’s Help Seeking**

Below are several examples of research studies examining stigma as a barrier toward seeking mental health services for men as well as the relationship of this stigma to men’s role norms in Western society. Johnson, et al. (2012) posited that the common therapeutic mechanisms of change (e.g., introspection, vulnerability, and disclosure) contradict certain
traditional masculine norms, including stoicism, strength, and self-reliance, leaving many men less likely to seek, engage, or benefit from some forms of existing psychological treatment.

Carrying this inquiry forward, Yousaf, et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 41 quantitative and qualitative studies which included 21,787 men ranging in age from 15-80+. The authors utilized Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to investigate the barriers and factors associated with a lower rate of men’s help-seeking. These authors found that “the most prominent barriers to help-seeking were disinclination to express emotions/concerns about health, embarrassment, anxiety and fear, and poor communication with health-care professionals” (Yousaf, et. al, 2013, p. 1).

Hammer, Vogel, and Heimerdinger-Edwards (2013) confirmed in a study of 4,748 diverse (across race/ethnicity, geographical location, income, education, and age) adult men that both self-stigma and adherence to role norms are barriers in the formation of help-seeking attitudes across community size, education, and income. Vogel, et al. (2014) further conducted a study on gender role conflict and stigma and whether these influence men’s willingness to refer their men friends and family to counseling. They found that there was a direct negative correlation between restricted emotionality, a feature of gender role conflict, and the willingness to refer loved ones to counseling.

Cheng, et al., (2018) conducted a study of 1,535 college students centered on mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviors, given the high rates of diagnosable mental illnesses on college campuses and the proportionally low rates of mental health service acquisition. They found that help-seeking rates are lowest among minority students, particularly Asian-Americans, and that self-stigma about counseling was more of a factor than societal stigma when it came to
initiating services. Specifically, the researchers found that “students who were male, were Asian American, who had higher levels of current depression symptoms, or who had no previous history of utilizing psychological services reported less favorable attitudes toward seeking psychological help” (p.70). While there were several limitations in this study, there proved to be a correlation between knowledge about mental health concerns and attitudes about help-seeking.

These studies indicated that men resist help-seeking for many reasons, often to contend with societal expectations of how strong and resilient men should be. This resistance even extended beyond whether they personally sought help but also influenced whether they recommended their family and friends who were men to seek help when they needed it.

**Counseling Support**

Despite the stigma on help-seeking due to the emphasis role socialization places on men to resolve issues without assistance, men and boys do routinely seek counseling services in clinical, school, and other settings (Graef; Tokar, & Kaut, 2010; Reed, 2014). Johnson et al. (2012) further found in their qualitative study of men seeking help for depression that together with the negative impacts of gender role conflict and other barriers toward help-seeking, clients have inherent resiliency and can use these factors to their benefit in counseling. O’Neil’s (2008) review of empirical research supported Vogel et al.’s (2014) findings regarding gender role conflict and offered that, “therapists can explain that RE (restrictive emotionality) is primarily a socialized problem, emanating from sexist attitudes about men and emotions, and learned in families, schools, and in our larger society” (p. 420). The implications of restricted emotionality and societal sidelining of men’s emotions include stress, depression, anxiety, and serious health problems. Counseling might serve to release men from these emotional limitations prior to the
deleterious effects of emotional suppression. Further, O’Neil (2008) asserted that restricted emotionality can be unlearned, and clients can move away from the idea that this is an endless personal failing.

When men do present for mental health services, Wong, et al. (2017)’s meta-analysis study identified that overall adherence to masculine norms may negatively impact client mental health outcomes. They asserted that clinicians should be prepared to explore how clients are enacting any of these norms in their lives and what, if any, consequences they may be experiencing as a result. Cheng et al.’s (2018) research reflected Addis and Mahalik’s (2003) suggestion that increasing mental health education in the public sphere such as through marketing efforts, celebrity stories of mental health distress and treatment, and public service announcements may help improve the perceived accessibility of services when needs arise.

**Counseling Approaches**

Whether or not men counselors need to specifically step in to work with men and boy clients is not definitive in the literature (Bhati, 2014). Rather than just gender matching, certain counseling approaches may prove to be more instrumental for men and boys than others. Through a conceptual case-oriented approach, Novack, Park, and Friedman (2013) suggested that Gestalt Therapy might offer an effective avenue to counseling men clients because they may respond well to the active nature of the experiments such as exaggeration, the awareness of physical sensations in the here-and-now as an access point to emotions, the application of field theory, and a focus on the phenomenological experiences men have lived. Regarding field theory, the authors stated that, “Social norms regarding masculinity and their effect on the client (e.g., adherence to restrictive gender norms) inform the client's ground and might become figural
during the course of counseling” (Novack, et al., 2013, pp.483-484). Additionally, the authors suggested that the counselor’s awareness and attention to the social forces potentially impacting the client’s life would necessarily flesh out the client conceptualization and “ensure that he/she recognizes the role that masculinity plays in informing the client's behavior, internal experience, and relationships” (p. 484). While not every client will respond well to an emotion-focused approach, this perspective on Gestalt Therapy may assist counselors in conceptualizing men as multifaceted and dynamic feelers as well as thinkers, as is common in the cognitive approach so often used with men (Novack, et al., 2013).

Kiselica and Englar-Carlson (2010) and Englar-Carlson and Kiselica (2013) explored positive masculinity as a specific approach to counseling with men as this provides encouragement toward intrinsic resilience, adaptability, and strengths. Their positive psychology/positive masculinity (PPPM) model de-emphasizes the conceptualization of problems in men as a result of gender role socialization and instead empowers men to capitalize on their innate creativity, capacity for growth and development, and efforts to improve their communities. While this conceptual research is responsive to the constructs of masculinity and manhood and their relationship to mental health and wellness, the researchers encouraged future empirical studies on the effectiveness of the model on a broad scale.

Evans, Kincade, Marbley, and Seem (2005) asserted that feminist therapy approaches may contribute to the counseling of men through the exposure of gender socialization patterns, empowerment of men’s desires to improve their communities, and encouragement toward social action that seeks to dismantle institutional forms of discrimination and oppression.
Moving away from a discussion on the structure of gender and its impact on help-seeking for men, it is also important to explore gender socialization’s impact on career choices for men, professional counseling being an atypical one.

**Career Choice**

The landscape of work in the United States has continuously shifted with the demands of a growing nation, centering on broad agricultural, industrial, and technological spheres, each with overlapping challenges and benefits for the worker over time. Opportunities to diversify the workforce coincided with the phases of the women’s movement, but also earlier when women were needed to take men’s places in factories while they were at war. Once men returned and many reclaimed their jobs, the gendered boundaries around work were re-established until the second wave began to significantly dismantle them. Barnett (1997) cited that no matter the realm of work, paid employment has always been an essential element of men’s development. Men’s occupations have historically been more dangerous or risky, following the prized masculine characteristics and there is a perpetual expectation that men will do better in employment and education than their fathers did, which puts added pressure on the importance of men’s work.

**Men in Nontraditional Occupations**

Men have had more career freedom than women for a longer period in history, but some occupations are still stereotypically frowned upon for men in society, such as being a stay at home father (Barnett, 1997), a nurse, or any occupation involving children. In a study by Rochlen, McKelley, and Whittaker (2010), 207 men responded to a survey about life satisfaction, social support, and stigma related to being stay-at-home fathers. A distinct limitation of this study is that 93% of respondents were white and a majority reported income well above
$50,000 per year, a reminder that men of color and men of lower socioeconomic statuses may not have the ability to stay at home with their children as they grow up. The results of this study indicated that men who viewed themselves as a caregiver and role model were happier with their choice to stay home than were fathers who made the choice for practical reasons such as income or because of an involuntary work-related transition. Many of the participants in this study experienced stigma resulting from ignorance, religious/political beliefs, and opposing gender roles or belief systems which left them feeling isolated in their roles and they felt lower amounts of social support. While social attitudes are changing slowly regarding men who choose nontraditional occupations (Chusmir, 1990) and there is more acceptance for men across careers typically associated with women, stereotypes still pose a challenge in views of men and work.

**Men as Counselor Trainees**

Bolstered by accreditation standards and efforts by the American Counseling Association and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, the entity of the counseling program is built on a foundation of social justice (Crethar, et al., 2008), yet how this looks is subject to faculty implementation and other factors such as the composition of prospective students who are considering graduate programs, and how focused a program is on cultural competency and social justice. For men who are more traditionally minded, comfortable with the paradigm of the patriarchy, and who are strongly socialized in role norms, the social justice-oriented counselor training program may pose challenges in the expectation of expanding what the trainee knows and how he knows it (Michel, et. al, 2013). As described earlier in this work, men are contextual minorities in a program where they are fewer in number (Cognard-Black, 2012). If they are unaccustomed to practices of self-exploration, deepening of self-awareness,
and cultivating empathy with and for others, classrooms and training components may serve to create uncomfortable experiences. Men counselor trainees with little to no exposure to structural inequality may have a tougher time acknowledging systemic oppression, multicultural identities, and intersectionality, because unless they hold a personal identity which differs from the mainstream, their privileged status protects them from contending with these issues on a regular basis (Liu, 2005). These men may not have had prior access to or be prepared for social justice knowledge before entering the training program but will gain it through social justice-aware practices in coursework, program events, clinical experiences, and conversations with faculty and peers. However, when they practice their new knowledges with friends and family external to the program, they may find themselves in the uncomfortable process of redefining expectations placed on them by others (Michel, et. al, 2013). Men who do have awareness of and engagement with cultural topics and social justice practices may have an easier time absorbing the material and applying it in practice from an earlier point in the program. Men CITs who also hold historically marginalized identities may experience being a token minority for which they are expected to speak about their experiences or knowledge on behalf of whole groups (Crockett, et al., 2018).

(Chusmir, 1990) argued that men CITs necessarily trouble or disrupt traditional stereotypes about men because they are choosing a nontraditional career path and embracing the characteristics that epitomize the empathic counselor inside a profession that includes advocacy and helping others through its core values (ACA, 2019, Strategic Framework 2018-2021) and builds social justice into its training standards (CACREP, 2016). The profession is clear about the type of student who will succeed in a counseling program through descriptions of desired
characteristics and skills such as empathy, emotional awareness, and emotional complexity (Gutierrez, Mullen, & Fox, 2017; Tangen, 2017), the signing of professional disposition statements and ultimately, gatekeeping efforts (Freeman, Garner, Scherer, & Trachok, 2019).

Many of the qualities that our personal biases and stereotypes hold about men do not align with what qualities we associate with the professional counselor (Healey & Hays, 2012; Miville, Carlozzi, Gushue, Schara, & Ueda, 2006). Individual personalities of men CITs may account for an adherence to these stereotypes, but the type of student attracted to the nontraditional professions may well feel more at home in empathic, caring, and compassionate spaces, as opposed to outwardly competitive, concrete, and aggressive ones (Cognard-Black, 2012; Forsman & Barth, 2017). The Pew study (2018) noted earlier, called Strong Men, Caring Women, also reflected that compassionate and caring were considered favorably for women but not for men, and further, that the term emotional was attributed as undesirable for men. It is unclear if contemporary studies like this one will continue to perpetuate a divide for those men seeking a career as a counselor or helper in which compassion and caring are essential qualities, or if the counselor’s natural inclination toward helping will override the societal barriers.

Revisiting gender-matching in counseling. As referenced in Chapter One, Winterste en et al (2005) conducted a study with adolescents on whether gender matching had an impact on counseling outcomes, and among several hypotheses, they predicted that stronger therapeutic alliances would form along gender lines, specifically for that of girl clients and women therapists. 600 adolescents who were enrolled in a cannabis treatment program participated in Winterste en et al.’s (2005) study, and 81% of them were boys. Most participants had co-occurring disorders and over half were involved in juvenile justice programs. 14 therapists were
recruited for the study, including nine women. Both the clients and the therapists completed the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI), the patient and therapist versions, respectively. The researchers’ findings revealed a few key points: (a) in general, clients matched with a therapist of the same gender reported higher early alliances; (b) girls’ ratings of therapeutic alliance were unrelated to the gender of the therapist; (c) boy clients’ reports of therapeutic alliances did not differ significantly by gender of therapist, yet they dropped out more often with women therapists; (d) men therapists rated their working alliances with girl clients lower than the girl clients rated them; and (e) gender-matched dyads were more likely to complete two-thirds of treatment (p. 404). This study revealed many more suppositions than it was able to address and there are several areas for future research identified around what might be more deeply involved in the success of therapeutic outcomes in counseling, as well as the specific approaches used by the therapists. The authors concluded that, “practitioners must remain cognizant of an adolescent’s need, or lack thereof, for relatedness, particularly female therapists working with seemingly resistant adolescent boys. Male therapists cannot underestimate an adolescent girl’s need for affiliation” (p. 406). While this does not answer the question of whether gender-matching is a specific goal to strive for, it emphasizes the counseling relationship is essential.

In 1981, Banikiotes and Merluzzi conducted a small study of undergraduate women in which they demonstrated greater comfort in disclosing to women counselors than men counselors. In a study of sexually abused girls, Fowler and Wagner (1993) found that clients reported no preference for counselor gender prior to, or after receiving, counseling services. Swift, Callahan, and Vollmer (2011) were interested in investigating the client preferences topic in more detail and thus performed a meta-analysis of studies from 1967 to 2009 that investigated
client preferences for therapist role, therapist characteristics, or treatment approach, and their impact on treatment outcomes and client attrition. The authors located only three studies in which clients indicated preferences for therapist characteristics (including gender) and in these studies, characteristics had no significant impact on the client assessment of their counseling experience. Despite Swift and Greenberg’s (2012) findings that men drop out of counseling more often than do women, attrition rates did not differ by provider gender; thus, gender matching did not emerge as a solution.

Wintersteen et al.’s (2005) study alludes to the potential importance of the approaches utilized by counselors with clients and that girls and women may naturally gravitate towards a relational approach whereas men gravitate away from it. This is not to say that men counselors do not or cannot utilize relational approaches (Duffey & Haberstroh, 2014), but they may often utilize more directive and active approaches such as coaching (McKelley & Rochlen, 2010), or career counseling (Graef, Tokar, & Kaut, 2010) in which tangible outcomes are frequently sought.

**Men as a contextual minority.** Cognard-Black (2004, 2012) highlighted the phenomenon of cultural minority status for men who find themselves inside environments with many women. While the population cited in the study by Isacco, Hammer, and Shen-Miller (2015) is that of doctoral students in psychology training programs who are men, the idea of men as a contextual minority continues to fit given the proportion of men to women in psychology programs. Isacco et al.’s study involved 225 men whose results bore out a benefit in holding a man’s perspective in working with clients, a meaningful career choice, and isolation and stigmatization by peers. Similar results were reported by Crockett, et al., (2018) of masters-level
trainees in counseling in which the population of women totaled 90%, yet the faculty met a better balance of 67% men and 33% women.

**Men as a token minority.** Connected to the contextual minority status, men who are the minority in a space with a majority of women may further experience a token minority status when they hold many intersecting identities and are then expected to answer for the actions of their gender from an even more nuanced perspective. Tokenization emerged as one of the subthemes in Crocket et al.’s (2018) qualitative study of 11 participants in which men engaged in self-censorship as a protective measure when there were other men in the class, but who felt obligated to respond in a tokened fashion when they were the lone man. Both the contextual minority and token minority status were cited to affect men’s experiences of their programs in both studies referenced here (Crockett et al., 2018; Isacco et al., 2015).

**Supervising counselors-in-training who are men.** MacKinnon, et al. (2011) highlighted the uniqueness of the supervision experience for men supervisees and the benefits of drawing on feminist theory in work with them. MacKinnon, et. al., (2011) explored the implications for supervisors of any gender who work with men supervisees and who also utilize a feminist framework. The authors posit that there are some differences of which to be aware for men supervisees, such as that men have a “tendency to focus on personal achievement and individual success” (p.131), which bears out in what section of tape supervisees present to their supervisors for evaluation. As cited in this same article, Scher (2005) found that this section of tape would more likely showcase a skill done well rather than one which invited constructive critique. Further, MacKinnon, et al. (2011) argued that men supervisees were less likely to risk feelings of shame and vulnerability and a loss of power should they leave themselves open to performance
criticism. In support of the previous statement, the authors suggested that these same men may experience O’Neil’s concept of “restricted emotionality” (p. 131) as a result of their gender role conflict and may have difficulty being present with clients in affective states.

Like women, some men have also suffered as a result of traditional gender role socialization, in that they perceive they cannot show emotion without being called weak and cannot let another person take a leadership position without having their own strength called into question (Paisley, 1994). These messages are reinforced by the media, by friends and family, and in the workplace. Men who experience dissonance between who they know themselves to be and what society expects from them are at risk for “increased levels of depression, distrustfulness, interpersonal isolation, and anxiety” (Scher, 2005, p. 131). Scher (2005) suggested that men supervisees who have a man supervisor will have an even harder time developing a holistic conceptualization of their counseling skills because of the above elements.

Doughty and Leddick (2007) additionally emphasized the fostering of understanding and reflection regarding gender roles and expectations in the supervisory relationship. Utilizing feminist theory while working with men supervisees guides the supervisor to be very aware of existing power dynamics and to be transparent about the collaborative nature of supervision from a feminist perspective, attending to the awareness of and action in multicultural competence and advocacy (Fickling, et al., 2019; Liu, 2005). The natural evaluative and hierarchical nature of the supervision process must be transparent and appropriately collaborative (Degges-White, et al., 2013; Doughty & Leddick, 2007). Supervisors are also recommended to model self-reflexivity through disclosures of their own supervision experience as well as in current clinical roles so that
the supervisor and supervisee build rapport and a working alliance. This self-reflexivity also encourages exploration of risk-taking, vulnerability, and the supervisee’s level of self-disclosure.

The Counseling Profession

Counseling as a profession has evolved over the past 100 years from a conglomeration of several approaches to mental health, wellness, career development, human growth and development, and existential and humanistic paradigms, into what we know today as professional counseling (Aubrey, 1977; Hodges, 2011; Kirschenbaum, 2004; Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002; Reiner, Dobmeier & Hernandez, 2013). The professional practice of counseling, rather than that of psychiatry, psychology, or social work can be traced back to Carl Rogers’ work as a psychotherapist in the 1940s (Aubrey, 1977; Kirschenbaum, 2004). Trained as a psychiatrist, but eschewing behavioral and psychoanalytic traditions, he proposed that clients had it within themselves to solve their own problems and he empowered them to discover their inherent self-agency (Bradley & Cox, 2001; Hodges, 2011; Rogers, 1961, 1980). Rogers’ early theory conceptualization had roots in Otto Rank’s work in empowerment, self-acceptance, and reliance, Kierkegaard’s belief in subjective experience, and Maslow’s self-actualizing tendency, as well as Rogers’ own practice of seeing clients and supervising counselors, and developing his theory in vivo (Corsini & Wedding, 2011; Fall, Holden & Marquis, 2010). Rogers’ perspective was in opposition to practitioners who took an essentialist and pathological view of human nature and human concerns. What are described as the first and second forces of counseling (Ratts, 2009), analytic and behavioral practitioners believed that issues and concerns could and should be cured and that only the therapist could facilitate this. Conversely, Rogers believed that the therapist was but one small part of the process of healing and that while the counselor could
provide companionship on the client’s derived path, they should not attempt to direct the client’s steps or use their power to irresponsibly intervene on behalf of the client. Rogers’ professional career in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s took him to California where he worked amongst progressive thinkers, philosophers, and human potentialists, most of whom would have believed in the empowerment of individuals and would have had expansive views on social issues (Corsini & Wedding, 2011; Fall, Holden, & Marquis, 2010). The span of time in which the counseling profession was in deep development and the second wave of feminism in which consciousness raising efforts were occurring likely enjoyed a somewhat reciprocal effect toward the breaking down of oppressive social norms. Aubrey (1977) stated that,

If one decade in history had to be singled out for the most profound impact on counselors, it would be the 1950s. Not only did this period produce major breakthroughs in theory, research, practice, and a professional organization, it also saw national and worldwide events shape the future of counselors (p. 292).

Rogers’ theory provided a bridge between promoting masculine ideals of independence, self-reliance, and ownership, and a recognition that relational capacities and empathy are essential to facilitating this growth, characteristics which are often attributed to women. Kerr (1990) posited that Dr. Leta Hollingsworth, Rogers’ teacher and mentor at Columbia University, significantly helped shape Rogers’ humanistic approach to counseling.

The Culture of the Counselor Training Program

Counselor training programs are influenced by their geographical locations, the institution type, the institutional philosophy, the resources of the institution, the demographics and background of the faculty, the demographics and background of the trainees, the demographics and needs of the clients served, and other unique factors. For the purposes of this study, two foundational elements that connect training programs to one another are the
professional association affiliations of the American Counseling Association or the American School Counselor Association and the accreditation standards body, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCCs) also play a strong role in many training programs, differing in emphasis due to some of the factors noted above. These competencies were devised in part starting in 1982 and were most recently revised in 2016 (Ratts, et al., 2016).

**ACA Code of Ethics**

Common professional associations between programs may include the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), and the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA), among many other divisions, state branches, and specialty organizations. Counselor training programs use the American Counseling Association’s (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014) to reinforce stringent and comprehensive guidelines on client welfare and professional behavior (Kaplan, 2014). Most divisions within ACA also maintain key principles, best practices, and professional competencies that particularize the ethical code for specific client work, such as that with multicultural populations (ACA, 2014; Ratts, et al., 2016). These essential guidelines emphasize our profession’s roots in client-centered work.

Two ethical factors salient to the proposed topic of study have to do with client welfare. These include broad practices of nondiscrimination based on legally protected cultural identities (See Standard C.5, p. 9), and working within the bounds of culturally competent assessment administration, scoring, and interpretation (See Standard E.8, p. 12). Standards related to the training of ethical mental health professionals and counselor educators extend multicultural
issues to the paradigm of counselor supervision (see Standard F.2.b., p. 13), as well as elicit a commitment to protect students from inappropriate sexual relationships (see Standard F.3.b) and sexual harassment (see Standard F.3.c., p. 13).

**CACREP Training Standards**

The standards requiring specific coursework and benchmarks embedded in the graduate counseling program were established by CACREP beginning in 1981 and have been continuously revised with the most current version released in 2016. The standards are meant to ensure that all students graduate with strong content knowledge and skills practice (CACREP, 2016). Many programs do not choose to align with CACREP standards, but those who do adhere to specific core curriculum and practices. These requirements take a generalized approach without use of gendered or charged language and with a presumption of success for all admitted students. Trainees in CACREP-accredited programs receive clinical supervision by site and university supervisors, participate in professional and collegial mentorship, receive targeted and overall training program support, and engage in professional association activities. Accreditation standards serve an important role in helping field supervisors know what they can expect from an intern or new professional. At an elevated level, the several components involved in the professional identity process include knowledge acquisition, skill training, ethical and multicultural competence development, supervised preservice practice, and early career preparation (Woo, Henfield, & Choi, 2014). According to the CACREP Vital Statistics Report for 2018 (CACREP, 2019), there are 871 programs at 405 institutions currently accredited for two- or eight-year periods. Additional programs are in the process of accreditation or are aligned
to accreditation standards. There are approximately 50,000 masters-level students enrolled in these programs, a 14% increase over the prior year (CACREP, 2019).

**Multicultural Counseling Competencies**

In a statement crafted by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development Professional Standards and Certification Committee, Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Lock, Sanchez, and Stadler (1996) made a distinction between *multiculturalism* and *diversity* in which *multiculturalism* refers to an individual’s race or ethnicity, and *diversity* involves the many facets of one’s individual dimensions of identity. The counseling profession serves a population of diverse individuals across these categories of difference (Weinrach & Thomas, 1998), but the clients are served primarily by a population of young, white, women counselors (United States Department of Labor, 2018). I seek to be inclusive of race and ethnicity in this study as well as individual dimensions of identity (Arredondo & Glauner, 1992; Arredondo, Tovar-Blank, & Parham, 2008) to gain a broader perspective of subjective experience, but my participants may not represent the general population of professional counselors or CITs given the impossibility of wholly accurate census reporting of these populations.

**Gender Studies in the Counseling Profession**

Because this study seeks to deeply explore the phenomenon of being a man in a masters-level CACREP-accredited graduate training program, it is important to know what existing literature says about gender in the counseling profession. The counseling and psychology professions have promoted increased research and practice focused on gender for the past four decades (Laux & Newman, 2000), yet there is mixed reception to adopting a feminist focus to their work by men and women students and faculty who consider feminists to be only angry and
anti-men (Chrisler, 2013). Enns (1992) cautioned that “psychologists who work with gender role issues run the risk of practicing without conscious, consistent, and coherent frameworks unless they are exposed to various feminist perspectives and integrate their reactions to feminism with their theoretical orientations to psychology” (p. 453). Despite the disparate feminist-driven program development (Evans, et al., 2005), the counseling profession remains committed to social justice advocacy, a hallmark of feminist pedagogy and andragogy (Chang, et al., 2010; Crethar, et al., 2008). “Feminist consciousness also includes a commitment to ending all forms of domination, oppression, and privilege that intersect with sexism and gender bias, including (but not limited to) racism, classism, colonialism, heterosexism, ethnocentrism, white supremacy, ageism, and ableism” (Enns, 2004, p. 8). Self-reflexivity, a practice in feminist theory, plays a major role in counselor training as CITs are trained to use their own background, experience, knowledge, and self-awareness to apply what they are learning before working with real clients. Self-reflexivity is difficult for those who wear blinders to their own experiences of culture and diversity, let alone that of others. A feminist multicultural approach to training helps structure and scaffold those early learning experiences toward developmental growth (MacKinnon, 2015; Wolf, et al., 2018) and trainees are encouraged to continue that development throughout their careers.

Research about gender has generally focused on quantitatively measured constructs of gender role conflict and methods of recruitment focused on men trainees and professional counselors (Dodson, 2001; Michel, et al., 2013; Wester, Vogel, & Archer, 2004), and the impact of gender on the counseling relationship (Anderson & Levitt, 2015; Thoreson, Shaughnessy, Cook, & Moore, 1993), but fewer published studies have chosen to investigate the purely
phenomenological perspective of men CITs (Crockett, et al 2018). Much research on gender in counseling has necessarily centered on the woman’s experience, an important extension of the women’s movement and fight for gender equality. Inspired by this sociopolitical culture, counselor educators and researchers embraced the development of multicultural knowledge and competencies, so much so that multiculturalism and social justice are considered the fourth and fifth forces of the counseling profession (Arredondo, Rosen, Rice, Perez, & Tovar-Gamero, 2005; Ratts, 2009). This body of knowledge was built on a foundation of race and ethnicity research, which broadened to include personal dimensions of identity such as age, gender, and disability (Arredondo & Glauner, 1992). Today, our definition of multiculturalism includes all demographic variables of identity (Ratts, et. al, 2016), and our advocacy and social justice efforts strive for the inclusivity and empowerment of marginalized populations (Chang, et al., 2010).

The lack of research on men as helpers may be directly proportional to the historical and contemporary need for a focus on marginalized populations of clients, CITs, and educators, but it also is likely due in part to the existing gender imbalance in the profession and an oversight on men’s experiences.

**Gender Role Socialization in Counseling Programs**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971) continues to influence socialized behaviors inside counseling programs as they do in mainstream society and students of counseling learn to reinforce gender stereotypes by what is modeled for them, if it fits in with their preexisting gender schema (Crockett et al., 2018). Therefore, by faculty’s willingness to challenge conventional beliefs and practices, they can assert a new culture of gender expression, behavior, and identity within the counseling program environment, disrupting
the expected schemata (Bem, 1981) and eventually breaking them down. If the culture of the program is open to change and there is a desire fostered by faculty and students for this level of change, transformation can take place, which ripples out to clients and others. If there is a resistance to change at the program level, the process can still occur individually and in small groups but may encounter more challenges and barriers in community-building and personal development (Crockett et al., 2018; Lara, Kline, & Paulson, 2011; Michel et al., 2013, 2015). Michel et al. (2015) noted that some faculty do not want more men in the profession, not because men would intentionally desire to damage a protected space for women students and faculty, but because of the assumption that the additional presence of men would automatically do that. The opportunity for an uncomfortable, though beneficial learning opportunity for all involved was not identified as a primary option. The exclusion of men students will leave women students and faculty without an impetus to grow from challenging existing paradigms, and this will continue to separate genders under false pretenses. A question further raised by this subject is, if men are not trained from a social justice perspective and more so a feminist one, will women clients be adequately served by men in the field?

**Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The contemporary study of gender in Western society embraces a constructivist approach given the establishment and maintenance of socialization patterns cited by scholars in gender research (O’Neil, 2008; Risman, 2004). Within this constructivist approach, feminist theory will provide the conceptual framework and lens through which to consider the broad and dense material presented by the topic of gender. Of note is the close yet distinct relationship between
social constructionism and constructivism, both of which are at play in this study and thus require definition and description.

**Social Constructionism and Constructivism**

Constructivism and social constructionism are frequently conflated in academic spaces, especially in helping professions. Both approaches reject essentialist and positivist notions of human nature where an individual is determined to be a certain way based on the interplay between genetics and the environment, a paradigm which underlies traditional thinking on immutable sex roles as dictated by biology. In contrast, constructivist and social constructionist positions maintain flexibility with what is considered “real” or “truth.”

However, these are still two different philosophical positions. Supported by ideas from Gergen (1991, 1995, 2010) and von Glasersfeld (2008, 2010), Raskin (2011) stated that, “While constructivists and social constructionists share a common interest in how people construct knowledge and generally agree that people know their constructions rather than the world itself, they sharply disagree on whether knowledge is a collective or individual achievement” (p. 225).

In this study, the constructive reflections and interpretations of the individual’s experiences were brought forth via the interview guide as well as their process of selecting responses to share, and a common understanding between the researcher and interviewee was constructed through follow-up questions, clarification questions, and reflections of meaning.

**Constructivism.** Related to feminism through critical social inquiry (Fraser & Nicholson, 1988), constructivist approaches focus on individual meaning-making processes where meaning is private and personal, an intersubjectivity perspective on how we construct knowledge. It
resists the patriarchal structure of classrooms and the hierarchical transmission of knowledge which inherently reflects power and control (Freire, 1970; McAuliffe & Eriksen, 1999).

The counselor training environment or the meta process of counselor training is largely built on constructivist forms of learning as trainees are consistently asked to review their understandings and interpretations of cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes for themselves and others. Considerable knowledge is gleaned from counseling textbooks on a wide variety of topics, skills, and applications, as well as learning opportunities from professors and clinicians in the field as they reflect on their own experience. However, counseling is a relational and process-driven, rather than solely a content-driven, field which demands that the practitioner has a keen sense of themselves and their understanding of the world in order to respond to the client’s sense of self and their process of understanding the world. “Constructivism holds that while we can never know whether our knowledge matches a presumed external world, we can know how satisfied we are with it” (Raskin, 2011, pp. 224-225). Ultimately, the client moves ahead with a world they are happier with, than the one that concerned them and brought them to counseling.

As presented above, counseling faculty will often employ a constructivist approach in the classroom. McAuliffe and Eriksen (1999) do this as a refutation of the “banking style” of education (Freire, 1970, p.74), which positions teachers as the arbiters of relevant knowledge. Instead, the constructivist approach intentionally transfers ownership of the learning process to students. Hansen (2004, 2006) uses the constructivist approach in the counseling room to similarly empower clients to respect the constructive nature of their own lives and inspires self-resolution of issues and concerns, instead of the counselor taking a hierarchical, or directive role.
Social constructionism. Rather than a purely internal process of meaning making, social constructionists believe that it is only through interaction of people and ideas that new knowledges can emerge. “Contrary to constructivists, social constructionists claim that the ways people talk and jointly coordinate with one another form the basis for developing communal constructions… and a relational process that occurs between and among people” (Raskin, 2011, p.225). Social constructionism has its roots in early existentialist and moral philosophy (Gergen, 1985) and was bolstered by the second wave feminist and early gay liberation movements (Burns, 2011; Connell, 1995). Constructionists believe that dialogue and social interaction shape our subjective reality, and that reality cannot be effectively tested or experimented upon through empirical means or reduced to essentialist factors and still retain its deep and rich meaning (Raskin, 2011). A natural uncovering of this subjective reality is found through inductive processes of inquiry. As such, a participant’s lived experience cannot be effectively understood by an outsider who carries predefined structures of rigid understanding, even when they genuinely hope to learn something new (Bhattacharya, 2017; Smith, et al., 2009). In order for a successful encounter with my participants, I needed to be open to what emerged from our time together Social constructionism underscores the following ideas: (a) that there is no one truth to be found in the world; (b) that we construct our own realities; and (c) that we essentially triangulate our own sources in an informal fashion to verify the realities that we create (Patton, 2002, p. 100). In this way, there is no true expert, in that we all contribute to each other’s knowledge acquisition and retention (Gergen, 1985; Solvie & Kloek, 2007).

This paradigm is also inherent to the field of counseling, as counselors help clients make meaning from real life experiences rather than focusing on issues and concerns as pathology.
Additionally, counselor educators and their students co-create new knowledges and understanding in the classroom space (McAuliffe & Erickson, 1999). Counselor trainees bring with them their own background and life experiences, previous knowledge, skills, abilities, and goals for the future. During the training process students will have influence with, and will be influenced by their classmates, faculty, and clients (McAuliffe & Erickson, 1999). Trainees will construct their learning as they go, dependent on those with whom they interact, the space in which they learn, and the knowledge they obtain. Constructionists believe the encounter itself transforms all participants (Raskin, 2011).

**Feminist Theory**

While positivist and empiricist paradigms have historically subjugated and silenced women, constructivist paradigms have largely created the space for women to show up. If the view or paradigm is constructive, then all within it is constructed and can be deconstructed. It is therefore not “real” and “true” and is thus immutable or unchangeable. This paradigm, then, allows for men to be freed from those same societal strictures that bind them to ideas of how a man “should” or “must” be and do masculinity (Gergen, 1985). Battacharya (2017) stated that “many feminists would argue that patriarchy hurts both men and women because it is a limiting discourse for everyone as it restricts people to gender roles” (p. 82). As described earlier in this chapter, many men are comrades (hooks, 1989; hooks, 2000) alongside women in the fight for gender equality and some have ascribed themselves feminists.

Consciousness-raising groups, which were homes for women seeking to redefine what it meant to be women in society (Evans, et al., 2005), also provided access for men to realize how the patriarchy imprisoned them in formalized ways of being and doing masculinity. Farrell
(1974), Fasteau (1975), and Tolson (1977) each wrote about the women’s liberation movement and what it could mean for men in freeing them from the constraints of gender role norms, with all three writing more specifically about the short-lived men’s liberation movement that did not ultimately take hold.

In conceiving this topic for study, feminist theory was immediately the most appropriate frame for studying the inherent complexity of gender as it related to studying men in the context of a woman-concentrated profession. This is a nontraditional or atypical career choice for men and very few choose it. It also seems to require skills that pull from the feminine, such as relationality, empathy, compassion, egalitarianism, reflexivity, and other characteristics that men certainly possess to varying degrees, but which are more often attributed to women. A dynamic that also interested me was the transfer of gender “ownership” of the counseling and psychology professions from predominately man-concentrated to woman-concentrated. A deeper analysis of the layers embedded in this is beyond the scope of this dissertation but is ever present in the fabric of the counselor training environment.

There is a need to expand the bounds of our perspective on gender, and to take a more critical feminist approach overall toward the study of counseling. The tenets of critical feminist theory would support an opening of opportunity for all learners in the counseling classroom. These tenets include, 1) the personal is political; 2) egalitarianism; 3) reflexivity; 4) social action; 5) debunking of the banking system of learning; 6) analysis of power differentials; 7) challenging traditional assumptions regarding sources and/or definitions of knowledge; 8) incorporating lived experience into the classroom; and 9) giving voice to those who have been marginalized (Fukuyama, Puig, Wolf, & Baggs, 2014). Perhaps not all of these factored
significantly in the results of this study, but these tenets offered an ability to conceptualize feminism “as a joint pursuit of human interests” (Schact & Ewing, 1998, p. 2) rather than a women-only approach.

**Trends and Gaps in the Literature**

Aspects of the topic under investigation in this study, such as masculinity and manhood, have been extensively defined and discerned through quantitative means in the past, but not sufficiently so in the context of men CITs, and not from a perspective of deep inquiry into participants’ subjective experience of manhood, masculinity, and atypical career choice. There are few qualitative studies seeking men’s experiences, and just three mixed method and qualitative research studies focused on men counselors-in-training, either from their direct experience or counselor educators’ perceptions of men in the classroom. Research has long privileged mens’ voices and until the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, the gay rights movement, and the disability rights movements, not to mention significant reform to research methods and ethical practices, other voices were not uplifted. Today, that has changed. The voices of women and minority groups are, and will continue to be, amplified and necessary. This research study had to suddenly occur to me in the intimate space of a small classroom before I recognized it as such. When I did, I realized that I had been potentially overlooking men as a unique group for quite some time, especially through the frame of feminist theory. Only through the uncovering of personal histories and experiences of what it means to be a man in society and more specifically, what it means to be a man in a woman-concentrated profession, can we continue to meaningfully deconstruct prevailing ideas about gender, power, and control,
and reassess what it is to be culturally competent and social justice focused within and surrounding the counselor training environment.

**Summary**

Throughout Chapter Two, I attempted to gather both empirical and conceptual literature to broadly explore constructs of gender involved in this study. There is vast research on the study of gender which is incredibly fascinating and far beyond the scope of this study. Gender is evolving as we learn more about what constitutes a human and their experiences within a society. In the United States, gender is an important cultural variable to describe how someone moves within their spheres, and how they and others might define them. What a man “should be” in Western society has consistently evolved over the fifty years of research introduced here, and as emerged in the results of the study, this construction of manhood is wholly that of each participant’s understanding. Additionally, the context of the singular accredited counselor training program provided a common ground for all participants in terms of training events and expectations, yet their perception of the program’s culture differed according to their lived experiences. Finally, the conceptual and theoretical lens aided in framing participants’ experiences in a feminist interpretation of those experiences. There is a dearth of literature on this specific population of interest, so this study will contribute another set of lived experiences through which to conceptualize men in the counseling field.
3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of diverse counselors-in-training who are men, inside the context of the clinical phase which is generally considered to be the final gate in the master’s degree in CACREP-accredited programs. This chapter is divided into eight sections. The first section provides a deeper description and exploration of phenomenology and the methodology of this qualitative inquiry. The second section discusses participant recruitment and selection. The third section outlines the context of the research setting. The fourth section describes the plans for and process of data collection. The fifth section discusses the data analysis procedures. The sixth section describes the potential benefits and risks of study participation. The seventh and final section presents my positionality statement and background of personal interest for this study as strategies for trustworthiness.

Rationale for Research Approach

A qualitative research design best served this study and the associated research question and sub questions to gain an understanding of the complexity of the experience of men in counselor training culture, as well as allowed the space for participants’ own structures of gender identity and experience to emerge (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Recognizing the limitations noted in many of the studies referenced in the literature in terms of needing more depth of information, a qualitative research design was warranted here to release the limits on participant responses which are usually imposed by previously constructed definitions and frameworks. In addition, qualitative research was best suited to explore personal meaning and social identities following
the paradigms of constructivist and social constructionist ways of knowing (Patton, 2002). The goal of this study’s phenomenological interview structure was to provide “thick description” (Ryle, 1949, as cited in Geertz, 1973, p. 6), depth, and complexity to the participant’s narrative as well as provide an opportunity for the participant to carefully reflect on his unique experiences, and for the researcher to “understand, interrogate, and deconstruct” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 20) the phenomenon under investigation. In Chapter Four, I attempted to weave seven individual narratives toward an interconnected whole through the process of thematic and interpretative analysis.

Research Questions

There was one main question and three sub-questions guiding this study, including:

1) How do participants describe and make meaning of their gender identity and expression?
   a) How do participants perceive gender within their family and cultural communities?
   b) What role (if any) did the counseling program play in helping participants make meaning of their gender identity?
   c) What are the participants’ perspectives about gender as they train to be counselors?

Methodology

Qualitative research is varied and complex in its approach. As described above, to truly understand one’s experience, one must be asked about that experience, and the qualitative researcher must listen closely. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that, “The qualitative researchers’ goal is to better understand human behavior and experience. They seek to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are” (p.43). van Manen (1990) said that while the phenomenological method is not a method at all, but a
guided approach, there are themes one can follow, if the listening ear and mind remain open to what the participant has to say. It is no small task to represent the words of the participants in their original meaning, situated in the intended context, in relation to other participants, all without losing the richness of the intent inside an interpretative frame.

**Phenomenological Research Design**

This study followed a phenomenological inquiry into the lived experience of seven participants (Bhattacharya, 2017; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Smith, et al., 2009; van Manen, 1990). In this study, I sought to understand participants’ gender identities, their program, classroom, and clinical interactions and experiences in light of those identities, the cultural messages they received in relation to their identities, and the meaning participants made from all of that. This approach required that I refrain from making personal assumptions about participants’ experiences and to recognize my own personal beliefs and worldviews apart from that of the participants (Bhattacharya, 2017; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this way, I wanted to understand the participant’s point of view, their working definition of terms or concepts, and how they defined and described events and phenomena in their experiences.

Phenomenological researchers create space for the social construction of ideas, beliefs, and experiences, and create new meaning with their participants through the process of conducting research (Bhattacharya, 2017). In this phenomenological approach, I gathered verbal data from each participant through a one-on-one interview as well as observed participants’ expression of feelings, nonverbals, attitudes, and other behavioral data. Interviews were recorded and transcripts were produced of the participants’ words. Immediately following each interview, I created a reflective memorandum of my experience of the interview encounter, including
observations of the participant, feelings elicited from the interview experience, and immediate reactions to the material. In addition, I created a reflective memo as I coded several of the transcripts in order to keep my personal reflections separate from the participant’s words so that the codes reflected that content and not my own thoughts.

While the time allotted for each interview ranged from 60 to 90 minutes, five of the seven interviewees extended the time from 90 minutes to 120 minutes at their own discretion in order that I could capture the responses they desired to give. Flexibility is encouraged in qualitative research when a change in a line of inquiry or a longer interview or additional interview becomes necessary to gain a holistic picture of the participant’s experience (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Finlay, 2011). Upon completion of the data collection process, I themed the data from what emerged as significant from participants’ accounts about their gender (Saldaña, 2016). This included identifying words or phrases seen as significant for each participant and building toward larger and superordinate themes that emerged from each case and across the cases. The coding procedures are discussed more fully later in this chapter. Finally, through completion of this data analysis, I arrived at a thematic narrative representative of all participants’ voices. A qualitative method allowed for the greatest possible amount of information on lived experience to emerge for rich, in-depth understanding (Patton, 2002).

**Description of the Research Context**

I conducted this research on the main campus of one large Midwestern university, located in a rural area where the local census population of the county is 104,143 individuals. The majority of the population identifies as white and holds a high school diploma, and the annual median household income is approximately $61,000 (United States Census, 2018). This county
is comprised of 88% farmland and sits 65 miles from a very large city. According to the University’s public information for the reporting year 2018-2019 (Department of Institutional Data, 2019), the university enrollment includes approximately 12,788 undergraduate students and 4,381 graduate and law students, for a grand total of 17,169 students. Undergraduate students represent an average age of 22 years old and a binary gender breakdown of 50.1% men and 49.9% women. Undergraduate race/ethnicity in the aggregate includes 52.6% white students and 47.4% students of color and international students. Graduate student demographic variables (2019) include an average age of 32 years old, a binary gender breakdown of 43.7% men, 56.3% women, and race/ethnicity in the aggregate, including 60.1% white, and 39.9% students of color and international students.

The most recent available data for this institution’s masters-level CACREP-accredited graduate counseling programs (Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling) come from both the CACREP Vital Statistics (2018) report submission for the reporting year 2017 and the institution’s public information for the reporting year 2018-2019 (Department of Institutional Data, 2019). This data includes approximately 125 degree-seeking counseling master’s students, representing a binary gender breakdown of 69% women, and 31% men, closely reflecting the professional demographics in the available research about counselor gender (Evans, 2010), but outpacing that of the counselor training environment which is comprised of approximately 83% women and 17% men. Additionally, the aggregate race/ethnicity data for this program includes 73% white students, and 27% students of color.
Participant Recruitment and Selection

For the purposes of engaging in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, et. al, 2009) this study was limited to a rather homogenous group. The criteria of all being men, of all being enrolled in a CACREP-accredited master’s in counseling graduate program, and all being in the clinical phase of that program (i.e., having completed at least one clinical experience) was made even more homogenous by recruiting participants from the same program. Even though this study focused specifically on men CITs during the later phase of their programs, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of their overall journeys and so I asked them to reflect on their expectations and hopes prior to joining the program all the way through their current stage of the program. The potential sample of participants comprised approximately 42% of the current internship population in the program. 11 brief notifications of an upcoming research study were emailed to the participants by the director of this dissertation project as this faculty member has direct contact with these students. The researcher then emailed all 11 students with the full participation materials: the IRB-approved Informed Consent Form (Appendix A), the recruitment email (Appendix B), the Interview Protocol (Appendix C), and the Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix D) which was designed to collect minimal information about the participants. Ultimately, much of this demographic information was captured in the transcript instead. Seven participants agreed to be interviewed, two declined, and two did not respond after a follow-up participation request.

While the criteria were met by all the participants and this helped the study approach homogeneity (Smith, et. al, 2009), individual experiences of common program statuses and program gates provided substantial diversity, as well as when their cultural identities diverged
from one another and informed their experiences in unique ways. Bounding the study within one program at one university was supported by Lincoln and Guba’s (2001) discussion that prolonged engagement in the environment increases participant-researcher trustworthiness. In addition to the somewhat common program phenomena the participants shared, I also had a prior relationship with five of them as a former instructor separated in time now by 18 months. This provided sufficient distance in space and time for me to approach the participants newly and to inquire about their program experiences without as much insider knowledge or bias as I would if I had interviewed them after just teaching them. I also was careful to ask participants for their reflections on what it was like to engage in the interview process with me in order to address any concerns they might have, both because of my former relationship with them as an insider, and as someone who does not identify as a man; thus, an outsider to their experience.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The phenomenological interview structure typically consists of at least one 60-90-minute semi-structured interview per participant in order to gain the fullest and richest data about the client’s lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). Development of the interview protocol from the guiding research question and sub questions and their continual refinement loosely followed Castillo-Montoya’s (2016) process, which include phases of “ensuring interview questions align with the study’s research questions, organizing an interview protocol to create an inquiry-based conversation, having the protocol reviewed by others, and piloting it” (p.811). My audio- and video-recorded interviews lasted from 66-119 minutes and I utilized a semi-structured interview guide that shifted slightly with each participant. I asked different follow-up questions of some participants, naturally following the conversation where it led, always returning to the interview
guide to keep us on track. The interview protocol (Appendix C) generally focused on three overarching themes to capture the fullest range of respondent experience: 1) the participant’s personal and cultural background, comprised of questions seeking to elicit their understanding and experience of their gender and intersecting identity variables; 2) the participant’s counselor training experiences, including questions related to program culture, and their perception of how they are perceived by their peers and faculty; and 3) the participant’s reflection on their journey thus far, what meaning they are making of their experiences, and what thoughts they have about their career aspirations.

Participants were asked to select their own pseudonym, and each transcript and file only included this name. All other student and faculty names referenced in the interview were replaced with a signifier of [omitted]. I utilized an internet-based transcription service to create all transcripts (rev.com). Upon receiving the completed transcripts, I reviewed each as compared directly to their recording and edited for mistaken translation, corrected content the transcriptionist could not hear or understand, and added back additional degrees of detail, including speech disfluencies, nonverbal behaviors, and laughter or other emoted sounds or expressions (Butler, 2015; Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005) that the transcription service typically removes. As a member checking measure, after I reviewed and corrected transcripts as necessary, I asked each participant to also look over his transcript for accuracy and to approve the final copy, which each did in a timely manner. Upon approval of the anonymized transcript, the recorded interview was deleted, and the participants were compensated with a $15 gift card for his time.
Data Analysis Procedures

After all interviews were completed and transcribed, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, et al., 2009) provided my analytical framework. The IPA structure provided a systematic process for me, as a first-time researcher, to follow until greater comfort with the method is achieved in subsequent IPA-guided studies. The arrangement and analysis of the data provided participant accounts which were concerned with phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). The hermeneutic approach consisted of conducting several close readings of each case, one at a time before moving to the next case and idiography was demonstrated through the connections made between and across the cases. Phenomenology served as the overarching method of the topic under study. IPA does not provide or dictate a specific strategy or set of strategies for coding the data and allows the researcher to select what seems most appropriate, but they do provide specific steps toward data analysis. Researchers should begin with the first transcript and: 1) read and re-read the text for greater depth and immersion; 2) make initial note of semantics and language used to build context; 3) develop emergent themes to map the interrelationships, connections, and patterns of codes and notes; 4) connect the emergent themes; 5) move to the next transcript or case; and 6) seek patterns across transcripts or cases (pp. 81-101).

Given that there is no IPA-dictated coding strategy, I heavily utilized guidance from Saldaña’s (2016) Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers as this text provides many pathways to data analysis. The data analysis in this study unintentionally followed two phases. The first phase is described here. To prepare my data for coding, I transferred each full transcript to a spreadsheet so that I could manipulate the structure of the content more fully. In the first
column I tracked the speaker; in the second column I included the text of the transcript; in the
third column I included blank space to record initial codes for each paragraph or line of text as
the spreadsheet organized it; in the fourth column I included blank space for an axial code built
from initial codes; and in the fifth column I included blank space to record the categories and
themes that emerged from collections of codes. This first phase of coding and analysis followed
the interview transcript linearly. Upon completion of this coding strategy and initial write-up of
results, I realized I had a very descriptive illustration of the participants’ experience in the
counseling program and other contexts in which they existed, but little specifically to do with
how their gender informed those experiences, and this process did not adequately address the
research question and sub questions in my study.

Therefore, I embarked on a second phase of analysis. In this phase, I elected to follow
another of Saldaña’s (2016) analytical procedures of “themeing the data” (p. 200) in which I
extracted all transcript excerpts where the participants specifically discussed their lived
experiences in relation to their gender identity and expression. I then organized this data
according to the research question and sub question structure. This second phase of analysis did
elicit significant accounts of the participants’ understanding of their experiences and how those
might have been mutually impactful, resulting in a new chapter of findings, one which was
authentic to the participants’ experiences of gender and more effectively addressed the research
questions at hand. While both processes followed participant accounts accurately and effectively,
Saldaña (2016) stated that this process of themeing is an appropriate one, especially for studies
which seek to explore the phenomenological world of the participant and to understand how they
make sense of their experiences.
To bolster my interpretation of the data, I attempted to infuse the findings with Ryle’s (1949) process of “thick description,” illustrated here:

A thickly described discussion section of a qualitative interview report successfully merges the participants’ lived experiences with the researcher’s interpretations of these experiences, thus creating thick meaning for the reader as well as for the participants and researcher. The reader is, thus, able to digest the essential elements of the findings, and is able to discern whether she or he would have come to the same interpretive conclusions as the report’s author (Ryle, 1949, as cited in Ponterotto, 2006, p. 547).

As noted earlier, IPA is concerned with depth, specificity, and complexity, so the fewer participants, the more the researcher can immerse into the data. With many more participants, the authors state that the level of analysis changes to focus on a broader, rather than narrower, level of detail, and would concentrate more on overall themes than individual codes or notes (Smith, et al., 2009). With seven participants, the data analysis I engaged in here bordered on these two procedural descriptions and favored the process of themes.

**Benefits and Risks of Study Participation**

There were three potential benefits to participation in this study for the participants and me. The first was the benefit of gaining insight into the experience of being a man in a counselor training program and developing a deeper understanding of the process of creating personal definitions of gender and experiences of masculinity. The second was acquiring reciprocal psychological insight into the current experience of participants and their constructs of understanding. The third was the interactive nature of the research process whereby the participants and I gained from the experience of exploring relevant phenomena. There were no reasonably foreseeable risks from the research study; however, additional debriefing of any sensitive material that may have been revealed through the interview encounter would have been
processed as necessary and I was prepared to connect the participant to a variety of local counseling services if the interview created undue distress.

**Evaluating Qualitative Rigor**

Maxwell (2013) and Seidman (2013) each asserted that the interviewer-participant relationship is a complex construct, and that while rapport is necessary to facilitate the interview process, it is the kind and amount to which researchers should pay attention, because there is a line where too little might not elicit deep and critical content, and too much may create a muddied interplay. It was important that I maintained my role and the participants’ respective roles while remaining respectful of and attentive to their stories. This was challenged by holding a former relationship with five of the participants, as well as a strong connection to the program in which they trained or are being trained. To that end, I contended with my insider/outsider status throughout the course of this study by engaging in strategies for trustworthiness.

**Strategies of trustworthiness.** The first measure of trustworthiness in this study was the amount of time spent with each participant. Most participants chose to extend beyond the initial cap of 90 minutes that I set to protect their time and all participants extended over the minimum 60 minutes requested of them. Reflexivity was a frequent strategy of trustworthiness and I utilized analytic memos at several junctures of this research: prior to the first interview, after each interview, and as a parallel to the coding process to offset my personal cognitive or affective reactions to the material. As described earlier in this chapter, I specifically requested a process of member checking so that I and the participants could be assured that the transcripts were correct. I also utilized thick description in the presentation of the results so that the participants’ words stood as evidence for their interpretation.
Researcher role. Using the above elements as a guide, I understood better the positionality I had as a researcher inside an environment common to my participants. I was curious if and how my prior relationship as an instructor during their first year in the program might affect the interview process and if that would skew my interviewing style or provide room for assumptions and bias. Except for the two individuals I did not know prior to these interviews, my social identities such as my stage of life, my race, and my affectional orientation were known to the participants from my time as their instructor. These identities were not discussed and their effect on the researcher-participant dynamic is not known from the data. I strived to ensure that I understood what the participants conveyed to me by seeking clarification where necessary to capture their authentic meaning rather than making assumptions about their intended meanings. I paid attention to in vivo key words or markers which I followed up on in some cases. Finally, given my prior relationship with some participants and the relationship two participants have with my dissertation director, the participants and I were quick to build or restore existing rapport. Two participants prepared notes of their responses ahead of time which still allowed for follow-up questions. All participants demonstrated comfort in a conversational style and many shared deeper personal information and their reflections on meaningful experiences. Two of the participants did not use video in their interviews, one due to technical difficulty with his computer’s video camera, and one due to being away from his computer and whose interview was conducted by phone. In both of these recordings, rapport is still evident by ease of conversation and flow of information, though interruptions were more frequent due to the lack of visual cues.
Positionality statement. I am a white woman and a sixth-year doctoral student pursuing a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision. I hold both a Master of Arts in Education and Human Development with a focus in Clinical Mental Health Counseling as well as an Education Specialist degree in Counseling. I currently hold first-tier licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and hold my National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential from the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). During my doctoral degree program, I accumulated four years of teaching experience with an average of three courses per term, including summers. I also coordinated an undergraduate career planning program for which graduate counseling students taught a course and I provided curricular and administrative supervision to them. Prior to my doctoral work, my professional career consisted of 11 years in higher education graduate student services, including service to a school counseling training program as the placement administrator and licensure specialist. I am now a tenure-track full-time instructor in a Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. All these experiences placed me in positions of power inside higher education, whether that be in a teaching, supervisory, or administrative position of leadership.

As I contemplated this study and began its formulation, the potential for inherent subjectivity and bias became potential impediments to the surfacing of the participants’ own words and experience through the course of exploring the research questions. Questions naturally emerged as I considered the various stages of the research from conception to dissemination. At the time that the idea of studying the experiences of men CITs arose, I was impressed by the sensitive performances of men students in a summer LGBT class I co-taught. I was moved by their individual and collective growth and development in a class focused on specific exploration
of multicultural topics, which can sometimes be controversial, depending on the group of students and their willingness to encounter theirs and others’ closely held values and beliefs. This drove me to wonder what the experience of being trained for a woman-concentrated profession meant to these men students when messages in society do not necessarily favor typically-feminine helping ideals, especially the societal consequences of men being associated with feminine qualities or characteristics and the threat that perception can represent with their peers and others.

I did not know then how these students’ historical and cultural contexts prepared them for the counseling profession, or if they naturally transgressed traditional expectations of masculinity and embraced a nurturing approach all on their own. I remember favoring these students for their outward displays of authentic struggle with their own preconceived beliefs about multiple cultural identities and their willingness to be open and vulnerable. I realized in that moment that the man student in a counseling program is not unlike a unicorn. They are statistically rare and thus treated as mythological creatures when they appear; therefore, I had an instinct to privilege their experience when it matched with the type of person a “counselor should be,” such as empathetic, relational, kind, soft, nurturing, etc., all things conceptually feminine. This bears out in a bit of research on the topic of faculty attitudes toward contextual minority students (Michel, et. al, 2013). However, since that summer term, there were several examples of problematic behavior and affect from several different men students in the program in which I taught that challenged me to remember that traditional socialization factors such as competition, posturing, defensiveness, and conflict do not escape these students simply because they are in a counseling program learning to be empathic, compassionate, active listeners, and helpers.
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The study consisted of a descriptive exploration of the personal definitions, perceptions, and experiences of the participants. The study included masters-level men CITs from one CACREP-accredited graduate counseling program in the rural Midwest. This study was limited to current masters-level students in the clinical internship phase of their program, or who recently graduated within the past three months, in order to have a high number of classroom and experiential contexts on which to reflect, yet not a large amount of professional experience. My best efforts in an exhaustive literature search yielded a cross-section of intersectional identities related to men and counseling. Cultural diversity in participation was somewhat proportional to the general population of the counseling program, yet more diversity was seen in participants’ interpretations of common factors in the program. Participant recruitment met the objectives of the qualitative research and Interpretative Phenomenological Analyses guidelines (Smith, et. al, 2009), but naturally ceased when two candidates declined the request, and the remaining two candidates did not reply to the recruitment request.

Summary

This chapter provided a rationale for the use of phenomenological inquiry into the lived experiences of men CITs. This chapter also discussed the methodology of this qualitative inquiry, the process of participant recruitment and selection, the context of the research setting, the process of data collection, the data analysis procedures, and the benefits and risks for study participants. Finally, I presented my positionality statement and background of personal interest for this study as strategies for trustworthiness in qualitative research, along with a research memo practice. As an inductive study, the participants drove the direction of the research, and
thus each participant interview differed somewhat in the follow-up questions the participants were asked and the content they shared. The data will be presented and explored in Chapter Four.
4. FINDINGS

Introduction

Driven by the guiding research question and three sub questions in this dissertation project, this chapter illustrates findings in harmony with the process of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in addition to the research study’s feminist theoretical framework which seeks to get to know these participants through their subjective experiences, and to translate this to our own worldviews and relationship to men and gender in Western society. I hope that readers get to know and appreciate these participants as I did.

The purpose of this phenomenological, semi-structured interview study was to explore the lived experiences of men during their masters-level graduate studies in a CACREP-accredited counselor training program. As a result, the findings reflect responses to the guiding research question: How do participants describe and make meaning of their gender identity and expression?, with three sub questions which focus on the personal, training, and professional environments in which they live: their family and cultural communities, the counselor training program, and the counseling profession. Seven participants provided rich narratives from their location in one counselor training program in the Midwestern United States. The single semi-structured interview approach elicited a wide breadth of experiences and unique depth of information in areas that were of particular interest to the participants. The interviews lasted from just over one hour to just under two hours and participants expressed appreciation for the space to share their experiences.

As described fully in Chapter Three, I engaged in a lengthy and dual process of data analysis. The findings presented here follow a process of data reduction in which the results were
organized by research question and sub questions, integrating the philosophy and methodology of IPA in the data analysis. Through the lens of IPA, the arrangement and analysis of the following data provided participant accounts concerned with phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). The hermeneutic approach consisted of conducting several close readings of each case, one at a time, and developing initial and secondary codes and categories. From these categories, themes were identified for each case before moving to the next case. Idiography was demonstrated through the connections made between and across the cases as well as in accounts of participants who had a different perspective on similar experiences based on their social location, background, or future aspirations. This process formed a big picture of the phenomena of gender through superordinate themes and subthemes which are organized by each research question.

Within this structure, I arrived at two superordinate themes and four sub themes in the main/guiding research question; four superordinate themes in reference to the first sub question; three superordinate themes and four sub themes in reference to the second sub question; and three superordinate themes in reference to the third sub question. Participants’ own words are utilized as meaningfully as possible to highlight convergences and divergences as well as to provide narrative and evidence for themes and subthemes that emerged from the data.

According to Smith et al., (2009), IPA is recommended for small research studies of six or fewer participants but can accommodate larger studies at a higher level of analysis. Even still, the process of data analysis is similar as there is a need to discern the threads that connect the participants and to provide data which supports the themes. Recruiting a homogenous group of phenomenological informants allows for closer examination of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and
environmental or institutional experiences. To that end, participants in this study all self-identify as men, all are 18 years old or older, all are graduate students in the same CACREP-accredited counselor training program, and all have overlapped in their classroom and clinical experiences, sharing faculty, classrooms, leadership opportunities, and other program spaces. For the purposes of identity protection, each participant selected their own pseudonym and all transcripts were de-identified of any reference to their real name, the real names of individuals they referenced who were connected to the program, and any references to their home institution or clinical site placements. The participants are referred to here by their chosen names: Mark, N.B., Cole, Kevin, Mitchell, Channing, and Floyd.

Guiding Research Question

The main research question was “How do participants describe and make meaning of their gender identity and expression?” The sub questions that fit within the main research question center on participants’ cultural and graduate school communities and as they enter the profession of counseling. These places and spaces are embedded within the overall narrative and necessarily overlap in the participants’ exploration of their gender.

Each semi-structured interview included a series of questions that focused on the participants’ definition and description of their gender identity, how they expressed their gender identity, and what they appreciated or did not appreciate about their gender identity and expression. Many participants also chose to interpret what they think and how they feel about men, manhood, and masculinity in general. Each participant described his identity and how he expresses it through the lenses of the contexts he was in at varying points in his life, the people he related to, and those who reacted negatively toward him or about him. Several participants
described similar contexts or experiences but interpreted those through their own background and understanding. The salient themes and sub-themes which emerged from an analysis of this set of in vivo codes were *ease and complexity* (*e.g.*, *awareness of deeper complexity, complexity of expression*) and *gender as performance* (*e.g.*, *masculinity, femininity*). Each theme and subtheme will be discussed.

**Theme One: Ease and Complexity**

All participants were able to articulate their gender identity with relative ease. Many did not stop at their identification as a man or male in the strictest sense of one’s gender or sex but expanded this label to include their affectional/sexual orientation and other social locations, such as race/ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status. Five of the participants identified themselves as cisgender and heterosexual, a few of whom further clarified that they do not think about gender identity on a routine basis, and started to say more, then realized there was no more to say, exemplified by N.B. who said, “I don't know if there's much more I could add to that, other than gender pronouns – he, his, and stuff like that.” One participant identified as cisgender and queer but noted that he was more genderqueer in his embracing of his feminine qualities in addition to his more masculine presentation. One participant identified as gender nonconforming and queer.

**Awareness of deeper complexity.** Two of the participants remarked that they are who they are and that they move through the world with little conscious awareness of what gender means to them because it is implicitly understood and accepted. This implicit understanding even extended to themselves as they had difficulty describing how others might know they were a man from the way they express their manhood. A few participants remarked that they were grateful for this research because it shone a light on an otherwise-neglected set of experiences
and the in vivo reflection helped them clarify their own perspectives. Kevin, identifying as cisgender and genderqueer, and Channing, identifying as gender nonconforming, each discussed the inherent complexity in their gender identities, as well as how deeply they thought about it in contrast to those who did not. The gender identity variations that Kevin and Channing described often placed them at opposition with the majority and in uncomfortable situations in which they were sometimes subject to harassment and scrutiny. These identities created challenges for them in how others related to them, more so than their own acceptance of themselves. Kevin also noted that his interpretation of his gender identity characterizes him as a “doer” which has implications for how quickly and how far he pushes clients and others to meet and exceed their goals, especially if he is working with another man. He has found himself internally saying, “…come on, you're a guy. You want to change, you want to grow, you want to do this,” and needing to pull back so as not to damage the relationship.

**Complexity of expression.** Asking the participants about how they identify what their gender is elicited fairly clear and straightforward responses, but a few faltered when attempting to describe their gender expression because they do not think about this on a regular basis, if ever. Responses were marked by long pauses and hesitations and seeking more clarity. Mitchell and Floyd both discussed the types of clothes they wear, the personality characteristics they project, and the sports they enjoyed, aspects that illustrate how they think others know them as men. For three participants, expression was much more complex to define and describe, due to being very different from the majority altogether and/or because of the societal review they perceived when expressing themselves in unique ways. Kevin remarked that for him, this was a “loaded question” because his experience is perhaps complex for others and difficult to precisely
explain, “I see myself as being a very feminine person, but I do know that the impact that I have on other people doesn't always come off as being that feminine.” For Cole, approval by others precludes him from dressing and expressing from the place of his authentic personality because he does not want to be pressured to answer for it or defend his choices. He has a desire to experiment with higher fashion, piercings, and unique hairstyles, things he sees as perhaps being a more feminized version of himself. Of the whole participant group, Channing’s gender expression is the most multidimensional. He was able to describe what he appreciates and does not appreciate about his being gender non-conforming, as well as what he appreciates and does not appreciate about expressing as masculine, and what he appreciates and does not appreciate about expressing as feminine. Both his non-conforming identity and feminine expression provide him with a sense of authenticity, embodied power, flexibility, freedom, and a lack of confinement, but they also come with the experience of being tokened for his gender knowledge, with scrutiny by others for any wardrobe or appearance changes deviating from the expected norms, and generally negative reactions from others or microaggressions. When it comes to his masculine expression, he experiences the benefits of given power, privilege, and authority. He also appreciates the simplicity of masculine fashion as with basic khakis and a button-down, but he remarked that on one occasion he rolled up the cuff of pants that were just a tad too long, and he received a myriad of comments from co-workers. One simple change amplifies his difference from others. While he enjoys the ability to dress and express as he feels on any given day, the societal review is exhausting and creates the need for evaluations of safety in various spaces. He feels the most freedom in queer spaces where he will choose to use feminine pronouns but would
not do this in spaces where he cannot be reasonably certain of his physical and emotional security.

**Theme Two: Gender as Performance**

Gender, used here, is a social construct, which means that it has the potential to shift and change over one’s lifespan. While most individuals will retain a consistent sense of their identities, how they express those identities may change as they age, experience new life contexts, and alter their relationship to ideas about themselves and other people. In this study, all participants described aspects of their manhood as it related to masculinity and some participants described aspects of themselves that might be perceived as more feminine. The additive term performance is included here to illustrate that as a social construct, the changing nature of gender is likened to a performance of masculinity and femininity. This is most poignantly described by Kevin and Channing, those participants who hold more diverse representations of gender, but it is also meaningful for those participants who are clear that they identify as men but who might expand their performance of masculinity and minimize any performance of femininity to foster acceptance by others and to avoid review or recrimination.

**Masculinity.** Three of the participants saw clear gender differences between men and women, perceiving women as more emotional and caring of others, men as less emotional and more restricting. All participants noted how masculinity is problematic when it becomes too extreme and all have been damaged by this in the past. Each has an experience with being bullied or witnessing bullying and feeling or seeing the effects of social consequences. Each who were bullied usually attributed that to characteristics they expressed which fell short of the masculine gender norms in place in their various contexts. These are discussed further in the following
section, but typically included mental, physical, and emotional toughness. Kevin called this “aggression,” and noted that he experienced backlash as he grew up for not expressing enough aggression. He found himself amplifying his expression of masculinity at his internship site a client population of perpetrators of intimate partner violence and attempted to respond in kind to their direct eye contact and strong handshakes in order to match their level of expressed power. Even though this is not who Kevin authentically is, he wanted to be seen and heard as having power or authority. On the other end of that spectrum is weakness. Kevin stated that, “…If I show up and I'm kind of timid or docile, they're going to be less likely to hear what I have to say or to even care, or to take it into consideration.” To further complicate matters, his internship site client population challenges him because they represent “a very touchy portion of my past,” the teasing, bullying, and homophobia of his early life. Channing had a similar reflexive moment with a military veteran colleague who he realized he reacted to as intimidating because he physically represents the archetype of Channing’s childhood bullies. Because of this experience, he became aware of deeper trauma that he thought he resolved.

Mitchell’s immersion and self-described “jock” persona in several sports in school and through college placed him in the epicenter of masculinity and he knew that the internal sensitivity he felt would result in peer punishment if he were to outwardly express it. He witnessed the consequences other boys endured if they were seen in this light. Later, in high school and college, he actively participated in what he called “toxic masculinity” behaviors until he could no longer resist his desire to discover his authentic self. Again, Channing’s experience of gender performance includes enjoyment of masculinity for the privilege, given power and authority, and simplicity, but he also sees the required rigidity and conformity that is required of
men. Mark’s impulse to be protective of his women friends and family is attributed to both his
gender and his ethnicity and while he has rejected many forms of machismo and other displays
of masculinity, he chooses to perform this protective element. As early as age nine, Floyd
described that he desired to emulate the boys who could get girlfriends. Those boys were favored
in school for their toughness and athleticism, and Floyd saw them as “fearless” and “super
confident.” His attempts to emulate them were reasonably successful later in school but his
performance of these qualities gave way to a truer sense of his softer personality in college.

Each of these characterizations is different, emphasized in some ways and deemphasized
in others. Each participant’s relationship to these forms of masculinity and those they might have
wished to mirror has shifted and changed over time, thus reinforcing the constructive and
performative aspects of masculinity and the mutability of individual growth and development.

**Femininity.** Many of the participants identified characteristics that they deemed “more
feminine,” “so-called feminine,” and “quote-unquote feminine,” as a means to qualify the
statement and partially own them without threat, and as a way to signify the constructive and
performative nature of the feminine. For most participants, this included characteristics like
kindness, empathy, compassion, listening, and caring for others. A few participants underlined
that while there are differences between men and women, the divide should not be so vast. Mark
captured an aspect of this idea when he asserted, “socially, we all have and want the same needs,
and emotionally we all have and want the same needs, but we go about it in a very different
way.” This is likely derived from treading the boundaries of the masculine and feminine perhaps
more than others of their peers outside the counseling program, but it is also likely a product of
their choice of career in a profession that is more culturally pluralistic and social justice oriented.
Apart from internal traits and characteristics, Channing, Kevin, and Cole desire outward expression of their inward femininity. Channing’s nonconforming identity is again a significant example of gender expression as a transgressive act. His frequent manifestation of femininity at work and in queer spaces provides him with freedom, fun, and power, but is also a constant reminder that society reserves the right to comment on how he presents, which can cause pain and discomfort. He recalled a client session in which he was working with a male survivor of assault and he could tell the client “…was just very uncomfortable with how comfortable I am with my flamboyance and my, like, identities,” and when he brought it up as a here-and-now intervention, the client was able to reflect that Channing reminded him of his perpetrator. With that revelation, they were able to shift course and deepen their working alliance.

Kevin feels naturally feminine and desires to express this more freely and authentically but struggles against invisible boundaries of propriety set up by society, but more locally by friends, family, and peers. He is “allowed” to stray only so far before others interject with, “I need you to kind of tone down some of your coolness or some of the flamboyancy because it's making me uncomfortable.” This creates an impossible situation for Kevin and leaves him with an inability to operate from his own boundaries and retain sufficient relational support. Cole’s desire to experiment with marginal femininity through fashion and adornment is reflective of his artistic personality and keenly mirrors the performative nature of gender expression, especially due to the temporal nature of changing preferences for wardrobe and appearance over one’s lifetime. His reticence to engage in this way is equal parts the societal influence which tells him this is unacceptable and the internal social anxiety which lowers his confidence to adequately respond to the potentially negative comments he might receive. Likely due to the latter, Cole did
not offer a possible scenario where he would be accepted for his experimental gender expression and is thus choosing to “tame it” and “box it away.”

**Family and Cultural Communities**

The origin point for most individuals to engage in a process of self-awareness and reality formation is in the home and cultural community. Each participant had a different upbringing yet experienced many similar messages about expectations others had for them and the general path they should take through life. Many of these experiences were challenging for the participants as they navigated their growth processes with or without family and community support.

To address the research sub question, “*How do participants perceive gender within their family and cultural communities?*”, the interview guide included inquiry about participants’ reflections on their childhood and adolescence, models or representations of men or boys that were salient for them in early life, and explicit and implicit messages that existed about gender in their cultural communities. Follow-up questions related to specific information participants shared that was unique to their experiences, some of which is also referenced in the themes that follow. The salient themes which emerged from this analysis were *super stereotypical stuff*, *parental influences*, *deviating from role norms and expectations*, and *seeking authenticity*.

**Theme One: Super Stereotypical Stuff**

Each participant knew and expressed what society expects of men. They easily detailed the explicit and implicit messages received from their families, schools, the media, and in general about gender. Most frequently these messages included boys do not cry, boys are tough, men work hard, men are providers, athletes are valued, and that to be the best, you need to be the strongest, toughest, and fastest, or as Floyd characterized them, “super stereotypical stuff.”
Mitchell fulfilled on the sports and athletics norm throughout school and performed well in order to fit in and be accepted by his peers. Other messages reflected values of restricted emotionality, striving to do well in school, and choosing a solid career path to provide for eventual families. Channing knew these external messages as well as the messages received from living on a farm and being expected to “work really hard all the time” and that men do not get or take time off or away from work. Mark received a similar message in the form of his father who was a workaholic whom he has since emulated, and N.B. also embodied generational expectations as he takes on being a student, working full-time, teaching a class, and being an Army Cadet. Despite the role norms he grew up with and took on to some degree, he recognizes this is too much and is working on setting realistic expectations while he pursues what he feels is most important. Due to these stereotypical expectations, Cole censors his outward expression to avoid social consequences for deviating from the norm.

**Theme Two: Parental Influences**

As expected from any reading of developmental literature, parents proved to be pivotal figures in many ways and set the scene for these men in their early and adolescent development. These influences were not always positive, affirming, and supportive, but there was a considerable respect in most participants’ stories of their parent(s). While the interview guide did not explicitly inquire about parents, they were usually discussed regarding the messages participants understood in the home, some were factored into the participants’ discussion of role models, and many were discussed in relation to role norms at home.

Cole and Mitchell’s moms stayed home with them while their dads worked full-time. Cole said that because of this and because he was the first-born, he formed a very strong and
possessive bond with his mother. She underscored his personality development as a sensitive and caring individual. When reflecting on influences from his father, he said, “I didn't really ever feel like I got explicit “dude stuff” from my dad. He never was like, "Let's go chop wood," or I don't know.” In N.B.’s upbringing, it was clear that men went to work, and women were supposed to stay at home. However, he did not learn this because his parents fully emulated it, but rather because they did not. His mother worked full-time in a technical job and provided a powerful example of what women could be. Because of this, she was often subject to criticism from the neighborhood and even by their extended and conservative family that she was somehow abandoning her children or missing valuable time with them because she worked. Channing’s mom was a “rock star” who worked full-time as a school counselor, in addition to helping on the family farm, and running the household. He said that while his well-meaning father liked “to believe that he's the man of the house and that he takes care and he does all these things,” Channing knew from a young age that his mom was the real engine of the family. Floyd’s mom was a single mother so while she worked full-time, he cared for the home, a habit that stayed with him and influenced his most recent long-term relationship with a partner who did not prefer that chore. In all participants’ cases, examples were provided to disrupt the idea that gender roles have to look a certain way and that they must be perpetuated in the next generations. Mitchell’s father, a licensed clinical professional counselor, provided a stabilizing influence in his life as he traversed a tumultuous late adolescence and early adulthood, helping him explore periods of being lost and enduring tough experiences. He and his father embraced “resilience” and “grit” as explanations for the successful emergence into the adult he is now.
Theme Three: Deviating from Role Norms and Expectations

As clearly as the participants understood and somewhat adopted the messages and expectations about how they were supposed to perform their masculinity and manhood, they each deviated from these in their own way and to varying levels of consequence and recrimination. Noted earlier, bullying in elementary, middle, and high school is one of the most common ways gender is reinforced. Explicit and implicit lines are drawn between what is accepted social behavior and what is not. Most of the participants experienced some form of bullying, whether it was physical, mental, emotional, or a combination of these. Other forms of consequence included isolation and aloneness.

Mark adhered to cultural norms by getting into a lot of fights in school and solving his problems with violence, an expectation many of the participants described, but he also deviated from those norms through development of sensitivity and listening skills. He was more in tune with emotions other than just anger and felt he had a fair amount of emotional intelligence. He utilized these skills to talk through problems with his friends and attempted to resolve their relationship issues. N.B.’s cultural communities, comprised of rural, conservative values, a second-generation immigrant and religious family, a multigenerational military service history, and STEM-focused career ideals, posed significant expectations for his future. In many ways, he has chosen to disrupt family patterns and forge his own path. Like Mark, he also demonstrated sensitivity, was in tune with his emotions, and was a support to others, but unlike Mark, N.B. had a strong penchant for nonviolence. He did not wish to solve problems by fighting, though the boys around him did. Perpetuated by his rural community, peers, and his parents, N.B. characterized violence and bullying as a punishment for “having these…‘feminine traits’ that are
brutally touched on by other, like, very masculine male figures.” He recognized that being an Army Cadet is seen as a contradiction to his nonviolent personality, but the marginalized and victimized military service member populations he works with in his current job, and will continue to serve in his eventual counseling career, well suit his helper-oriented personality traits, a fulfillment of his justice-oriented ethics.

Like Mitchell’s extensive experience in youth sports, Cole played competitive travel hockey as a kid. He enjoyed many aspects of the sport but was troubled by the intensity of the dads and coaches and their “passionate critique” of players’ performances. He could even make sense of that, though, because it served to make them better players. What he could not easily understand were the “dad rituals” of beers and wings after the games where the kids would all be taken to Hooters to celebrate a win or commiserate after a loss. He went through the motions, but he would much rather have been anywhere else, preferably doing music or art. The team also engaged in “mild hazing” of boys who found girlfriends or liked girls, and these boys would be teased mercilessly by other teammates, dads, and coaches, in the locker rooms, on the ice, and in the stands. Cole was embarrassed by the whole charade and said he will never be “one of those dads,” and he never felt like he fit in as a jock. He sees old teammates on Facebook and still finds that he cannot relate to them.

Channing’s complexity of identity and expression lent itself to many messages throughout his early life, and more often than not, these were turned inward as feelings of shame and guilt for not being what others expected of him. If he was performing masculinity, he was doing it wrong, and if he was performing femininity, he should not be. Men were not to cry, or be “sissies”, or care too much about their looks. As a result, Channing saw himself as too
emotional, too sensitive, and too focused on his appearance. With concomitant body issues, he had a difficult time at home and in school finding places and spaces where he felt comfortable. Emulating female superstars like Beyoncé, Cher, Britney Spears, and Shania Twain gave him an important outlet for his feminine energy. Still, while he could walk like them, talk like them, and sing like them, he could never be them.

**Theme Four: Seeking Authenticity**

Each one of these participants struggled with the expectations placed on them by home, culture, school, and society and the internal characteristics and traits they were discovering and developing. Each of these men knew they were different from the boys they grew up with and were different from the men they were meant to grow into. In their own ways, they expressed a desire for authenticity and realness as they grew up. For many, this required leaving home and creating boundaries, sometimes distancing themselves from their families to give them a chance for a different experience. Cole and N.B. both cited a struggle with the responsibilities they are supposed to soon take on, to ensure they complete their education, find a good job, and settle down to raise an eventual family. Neither of them feels they are ready for this yet, though they feel the intense pressure. The tension between what is current and what is future is causing uncomfortable stress when what they want is to continue developing their acceptance of self and figuring out who they truly want to be. Kevin expressed that, “I can’t just be *me*” as he routinely finds himself stuck between his felt confidence of himself and society’s expectations of who he should be. Floyd is currently in the middle of big life transitions and feels an aloneness and isolation that is uncomfortable. He is lacking in authentic connections with others and is only now building a fledgling authentic connection to himself. For many years, he felt disconnected
from himself and through recent yoga practice has found a way to “soften his center again” but does not have anyone with whom to share that growth and development as graduate school friendships are fleeting and it is difficult to make meaningful relationships with others as he nears 30. As Mark’s social awareness and his desire to protect and uphold women in his life grew, he took action against the anti-feminist and misogynistic behaviors of his existing friends and began to create tighter boundaries in his social circles. He chose to cut friends out of his life who did not align with his values in an effort to increase his striving for authenticity and integrity. While his social circles are now smaller, they are stronger and tighter.

Though all the participants differ in age within an approximate span of 10 years, Cole seemed to wonder for himself and on his peers’ behalf if all of this struggle could be reduced to a “quarter-life crisis,” almost as if that would make it easier to conceptualize and process. Indeed, their stories of the tension between who they were, who they are, who they will be, and what others want from them and for them likens itself to that quintessential developmental rite of passage. This passage often prompts the seeking of a greater understanding of purpose, and “leveling up” as Mitchell called it, yet these participants are also negotiating themselves through a counselor training program which exponentially accelerates processes of self-discovery, inquiry, and ability, marked by the adages, “growth comes from discomfort” and “trust the process,” often incongruent with the stereotypical expectations or characteristics of men.

**The Crucible of the Counseling Program**

Many components of accredited counselor training programs such as the standardized curriculum, the credit hours required, and the presence of multiple clinical experiences are similar, but the culture and experiences within each program will differ. All participants in this
study come from the same graduate program, but each had a different experience of it and a
different interpretation of program culture based on their individual background, cultural
identities, and interactions with others. To address the research sub question, “What role (if any)
did the counseling program play in helping participants make meaning of their gender
identity?”, the interview guide included questions relating to participant reflections on their
hopes and expectations for the counseling program prior to beginning it, the highs and lows in
the program overall, specific experiences they recalled having, and any changes participants
noticed in their personal life as a result of being a man in the program. Participants were also
asked how they experienced components of the program through the lens of their gender identity,
such as with faculty, in the classroom, and in their clinical experiences. They were also asked to
reflect on how the program might have helped shape their understanding of gender. The salient
themes and sub-themes which emerged from an analysis of codes and categories were
masculinity, manhood, and the patriarchy (e.g., rejecting toxic masculinity, being themselves),
and cultural competence (e.g. intersectionality, tokening), and developing professionalism.

Theme One: Masculinity, Manhood, and the Patriarchy

Masculinity, manhood, and the patriarchy emerged as a combination of similar terms, as
participants discussed their relationship to their peers, faculty, and clients from their point of
view as a man. The effects of being a man in the program were variably clear for the participants.
For some, it seemed to have no effect, and for others, gender played a big role in their
experiences of the classroom and clinical experiences, as well as the way they related to faculty.

Mark was open in his personal bias against men, fostered because he has witnessed men
engaging in bad behavior over his lifetime and has seen women in his life be mistreated by men.
He said, “When I look at myself and when I think about myself … I don’t really look at my being male as something that I’m proud of.” This belief predated his entry into the program but it extended to his preference in working primarily with women faculty and supervisors so he could learn new things and competent ways of relating to his women and girl clients. Kevin did not anticipate uncovering a similar resistance, but when he was in his practicum supervision experience, led by two men, he found himself pushing against what he was being asked to do because he felt it was not authentic to him. He characterized it as a “male ego clash” between he and his supervisors. “I didn't even know I had this egotistical problem, or this put off from working with men in general, but it just sort of crept on in.” He struggled to process his reactions in a compressed period of time so as to learn from the experience and grow from it, but it was difficult to resolve, both internally and with his supervisors. It became “just another missed opportunity, I guess, to get guidance from men from this field, which is already kind of limited.”

In a way to further explore and process this shaky dynamic with men, Kevin chose to work with male perpetrators of domestic violence for his internship experience. In his effort to find his place with them, he asked himself, “How do I relate to cis-het men who have these ideologies about their manhood or what masculinity is, or what it means to be a man in a heterosexual relationship?” He felt that this relatedness would help him empathize while he attempted to rehabilitate men “from the toxic masculinity or the misogyny, breaking down the patriarchy, and trying to kind of deliver my own sort of feminist touch, but also coming from a person that’s a male body from like a male experience.” These were difficult questions to tackle in the limited space of a counseling internship, but he has learned a lot about himself in the process of learning a lot about his clients and is optimistic at the level of growth he feels and has
witnessed. The clients are much more multifaceted to him now and he is conceptualizing them through a strengths-based and feminist lens:

So, trying to sort of find my way of helping them kind of take some of the pressure of masculinity off of them while also trying to find their own humanness. You don't have to be this big tough macho man. You don't have to be this person that's always in power or having control over someone else to feel great about you. You could just be. If you are in a relationship that's sort of toxic that is causing you or leading you to want to use violence or manipulation, or any other form of control over another person to feel like a man, then perhaps that's not the best relationship for you… I have been able to touch on it a bit with certain clients. However, I've been finding that a lot of who I am as a man is wrapped up into this idea of power and control.

Tearing down the patriarchy by himself is a bit of a tall order, but the impetus to do so is partially driven by Kevin’s hope that these men do not allow these damaging ideas to traverse generations behind them, that by introducing these concepts now, the clients can disrupt the thought patterns and behaviors before their children adopt them.

**Rejecting toxic masculinity.** Though toxic masculinity is more of a colloquial expression in society than an academic one, there was a unanimous rejection by all participants of the performance and perpetuation of toxic masculinity, in all its presentations, such as: bullying, mistreatment of women, resolving conflict with violence, or required characteristics like being stern or macho. Because several of the participants experienced being bullied and tormented as children and adolescents, they acutely saw the effects of masculine norms, norms which created challenges in their development and in the formation of healthy social relationships. While bullying is increasingly seen for its real damage, violence, and trauma, rather than just “normal kid stuff” of past generations, these participants still felt a dismissal or minimization of their experiences from important others in their lives. Channing recalled only one teacher who stepped in to intervene and while he stepped forward in a very significant way in Channing’s eyes, he
was still only one. N.B. recounted his experience of toxic masculinity with his father’s expected and patriarchal response to it, “Toughen the fuck up and you’ll be fine.” His mother also perpetuated patriarchal masculine norms in her own way by saying, “Find a way to deal with it. Just get through it.” Upon reflection, he recognized this as also being a regional response given the rural, conservative, role-driven community he grew up in, but as a young, sensitive, nonviolent person, he internalized the bullying and blamed himself for both being subject to it and for not being able to resolve it. In classroom discussions centering on toxic masculinity, Mitchell voiced some experience on the other side of the matter, having self-described prior engagement in toxic behaviors. After reckoning with his prior self, he said he is “very comfortable” talking about this with his classmates from his changed perspective and has not felt any judgment in response. Cole felt left alone and isolated by faculty in his clinical experiences when he was struggling to figure out how to process experiences with clients or his progress through the program. He acknowledged this may be a “grad student thing” within a program that routinely offers “trust the process” as a calming or quieting mantra because of the developmental belief that with adequate frameworks everyone gets where they need to go in their own time, but the experience felt less than encouraging as he was trying to learn and apply unfamiliar yet important material. He did not perceive this as punitive or intentional, but rather that they were perpetuating a mild form of hegemonic masculinity, an assumption that he did not need the same assistance as others and that he would figure things out on his own.

**Being themselves.** Like the theme of authenticity noted earlier in this chapter, *being themselves* reflects a deeper desire to not conform to any structure of personhood or manhood. The participants would prefer a world in which labels are not used to categorize others. Many
participants who were clearest about this desire also struggled to clearly identify their gender identity and expression. These men are white, heterosexual, and cisgender and they hold a considerable amount of privilege in society. This allowed for the space to express a desire to not have to engage in gender review or consideration because they do not need to do this as a matter of course, and to wear *privilege blinders*, the ability to ignore the need for diversity around them. The participants who realized early in life that they were different and that it mattered to those around them have not been able to escape society’s scrutiny. They, too, wish to be themselves without needing to prove anything or meet others’ expectations, but they have rarely had this opportunity to begin with.

**Theme Two: Cultural Competence**

This theme emerged from the frequency with which participants mentioned the necessity to be culturally competent and the ways in which they felt they fell short in their achievement of it. On some level, they understood this competence as a process, not a place, and more than that, it is relative, depending on where one is in their cultural knowledge and sensitivity. From this vantage point, the program feels miles ahead in its progressiveness or feels miles behind; good intentions, but not enough action. Those who grew up inside identities which were already different felt that the program is genuine in its striving to provide good cultural education, but it needs to do more. Many participants were appreciative of the cultural education they were exposed to because prior to their graduate program, they had not taken part in discussion and dialogue in any sort of careful and intentional way about those who were different from them and how they could relate to experiences of difference. Through this, or more directed activities such as those helping to identify power and privilege, the uncovering of personal biases was
particularly impactful and appreciated in the learning process. While most participants cited that clients did not overtly express their desire for a non-male counselor, N.B. said of his clinical experiences,

I had a couple of clients that were honest with me and said they weren't comfortable talking to a man about their problems. So, that's where I really got the sense of maybe this is something that goes a lot deeper than I might be thinking about, and it's clearly based in some sort of belief there.

The extent to which the participants felt comfortable engaging in class conversations on topics of diversity seemed to be related to their cultural identities as white, cisgender, heterosexual men. They deigned to participate openly in sensitive discussions on topics such as race and sexual/affectional identity because they felt they could not adequately contribute to the discussion from their own frames of reference. They often chose instead to listen and absorb accounts of others’ experiences. However, as Kevin and Channing elucidated, this silence had a greater impact in that there was no concomitant learning process between different groups of students as a way to check and validate their understanding.

**Intersectionality.** Part of this cultural competence is the understanding of how an individual’s identities interact in the various spaces where they exist and how they are impacted by those intersections. Only a few participants claimed specific cultural identities apart from their gender identity, but when they did, they listed things like race/ethnicity, age cohort, sexual/affectional identity, geographic community, ability status, and socioeconomic status as being impactful to them. Cole and Floyd’s program and classroom experiences were often filtered through the additional lens of their social anxiety because it was challenging to put themselves out there and engage, and it created uncertainty around relationship formation and class discussions.
Kevin identified himself as one of two black, queer men in the program. Illustrating more specifically the experience of responsive silence in classroom spaces, Kevin felt he was given the privilege of having a platform to express his views at times; however, he recalled that everything he said or talked about was readily accepted and never challenged, which is not what he expected in graduate school, and which was not always useful. What he said was not mirrored through someone else’s interpretation or perspective, as so often occurs in regular dialogue; thus, there was no process of seeking common ground or joint learning. Not seeing his identities reflected in the faculty or the curriculum further separated him and created a need to translate content from the material through his intersectional experiences and back out into the work he produced. This proved necessary for his understanding and application of program material, but it was exhausting. More impactful than the overall experience of being a multiple minority in the program was an encounter with a supervisor who told him that his identities did not matter in the clinical space. Kevin generously interpreted this to mean that the supervisor was attempting to see and treat everyone as the same, but in reality, he ignored the identities of multifaceted people with rich backgrounds and experiences. In Kevin’s words, this ideological clash smacked of “casual racism and homophobia” and sent a clear message to him that persons in positions of power, especially in a counselor training program, need to hold themselves to greater account in practicing an awareness and understanding of intersectionality. Another experience with a male doctoral student who also demonstrated casual homophobia underscored Kevin’s perception that the program can do more in terms of putting in place the mechanisms to deeply practice the cultural sensitivity they wish students to learn.
Channing reiterated intersectional identities that included gender nonconforming, queer, rural farming community, and a lower socioeconomic status. As earlier described, his fluidity with gender expression involuntarily invites commentary by others which can cause stress and anxiety and questions of safety. These identities and experiences have shaped who he is, how he conceptualizes his awareness of himself and his contributions in the world, and how he will move forward as a counselor. He remarked that the program was beneficial to him in helping him uncover more identities than the ones he knew he walked in with – his gender identity and affectional orientation. Adding knowledge layers of racism, sexism, capitalism, and the patriarchy, helped him expand his understandings of how he fit into bigger social contexts and provided more clarity on where he was both privileged and marginalized.

**Tokening.** While men hold the majority of power and privilege in general society, they are considered a statistical and contextual minority in the counseling program. Beyond being in a statistical and contextual minority group within the program, men who hold additional intersectional identities may further experience being tokened as a minority, wherein they are asked to speak as a representative of the group(s) to which they belong.

In this study, none of the participants explicitly used the word “token” with reference to their program or classroom experiences; however, as members of multiple minority groups, Channing and Kevin described something akin to tokening. Channing noticed that when there were multiple other gay men in the room, instructors might ask them to shed light on their experiences, but mused that this can “get a little bit shaky” when their viewpoints are accepted without further inquiry or dialogue, something Kevin also reflected as a learning concern. Kevin’s experience in the classroom was intricate and complex due to the multiple layers of
analysis he applied in retrospect. Given the gender disparity as well as that of racial and sexual/affectional identities, he felt that a form of privilege was afforded to him because his voice in the classroom represented a multiple minority. While he appreciated the space to share his views, he wondered if he was being given a platform simply because he was a man, thus reinforcing the patriarchy, or simply because he was black, or simply because he was queer, or a combination of the three, over privileging his multiple minority status. Commenting further on the impact of being a minority in society, a contextual minority in the program, and the statistical lack of intersectional representation from other students and faculty, Kevin essentially tokened himself. He said,

…even in the classroom, I feel like I have to express myself because I can’t… I don't see myself there. So, I'm either having these conversations out loud in the classroom, or I'm sitting in the classroom in the same spot having to go through all of these things in my mind while also listening to other people talk about the other stuff. So, as I'm trying to process how I can relate to any of the stuff, I'm still listening and trying to process everybody else's experiences. For me, that's a lot of work. That's a lot of work for other people to do too, so it can become very, you know, like, exhausting. I think that it may tend to lead people to the sense of burnout just a little quicker too because there's no one there to say, to help them process what they're experiencing in that moment.

As earlier described, this reflected a process of translation that continually had to take place in Kevin’s mind through his own background and understanding, because the classroom discussion on the text material and other curriculum was not originating from Kevin’s reference point. It was originating from the perspective of white men and white women who built the counseling profession. Kevin said it would have been meaningful to hear from the faculty that,

Hey, you don't have to do all of these things. You could just show up and just be you. You don't have to be the black, queer speaker for all of your race and gender, sexuality and all of that. You can just be you in the space and not have that pressure of trying to educate others or go through the process of even challenging people on their casual homophobia or whatever.
Outside of the program, at his internship turned workplace, Channing said he is routinely tokenized to educate staff on all issues that might impact LGBTQ+ clients. Recognizing that he holds these identities and he has a graduate certificate in LGBT Studies, he understands the request but would prefer to share the burden of education with others, and to not be considered the arbiter of how “woke” his colleagues are as they use terminology or cite statistics related to the communities and then turn around and seek his approval or confirmation. This is a difficult position to be in when no one else on the staff openly identifies as a gender or sexual/affectional minority, which speaks to a greater need to diversify mental health providers in rural communities.

Though he identified as white, cisgender, and heterosexual, Cole also described a feeling that approximated passive tokening in that he was never asked to explicitly speak for his whiteness or his gender or his heterosexuality, but without providing a specific topic or situation, he described a feeling of being “roped in” during class discussions as a member of a large group of people (e.g., cis-het white men). He felt this was a complicated attribution because he also had a problem with the behaviors of many cis-het white men in the form of toxic masculinity. Still, he recognized that he was a visible representative of this group, especially in the space of the counseling classroom.

**Theme Three: Developing Professionalism**

_Devolving professionalism_ emerged somewhat as a shadow theme from a developmental perspective. While it was not extensively discussed by each participant, the program was credited with this felt level of professionalism they did not possess prior to it. Each of the participants had completed a significant portion of their program by the time of the interview for
this study and had several coursework and clinical experiences on which to reflect. For many of the participants, the implicit values of education, career, and future success were tied to their understanding of gender or to others’ understanding of gender on their behalf (i.e., men are to be the educated breadwinners and providers). To expand his opportunities for upward mobility, Mark focused on networking and forming relationships with those who could help him better himself and he challenged himself to overcome his own self-doubt and recognize his accomplishments. He felt that the program softened his hard edges and “acted as a catalyst for me to just be a better overall person, who is more aware of themselves…who is more intuitive…who’s more open to learning… definitely opposite of what I was prior.” N.B., and Cole each noted the huge milestone that completing this program represents, and that it fulfilled on the male role norms expected of them as they move ahead in their lives. At varying points in their training, however, they each felt some pressure to defend their choice of career to their families and friends as a real and significant pathway as it occurred as less masculine than other professions. However, through their discernment of what counseling meant to them and their translation of this discernment to those in their lives, their commitment to the profession was deepened and their identities were further defined. For N.B., the additive leadership opportunities and ally training helped him feel more prepared to work with diverse clients, like Channing’s graduate certificate in LGBT Studies. Channing additionally felt that the program above all served to prepare professionals for the field and that this should occur regardless of individual identities. He said, “I am here to fulfill a professional role. Like, my identities don't really have a lot to do with my ability,” a sentiment echoed by several other participants. Kevin disagreed, in part, that identities do matter because they shape the person of the counselor, the client
populations the counselor desires to help, and where they find comfort and meaning in the work they do. Given this, Kevin felt the program has a responsibility to integrate identities and representation more acutely in the curriculum and the fabric of professional counselor identity development, rather than something they are left to do solely on their own.

**Reflecting and Moving Forward**

To address the final research sub question, “*What are the participants’ perspectives about gender as they train to be counselors?*”, the interview guide included questions to elicit reflection on career discernment and goals, clinical populations they desired to work with, what led them to choose counseling as a career, personal characteristics that contributed to their counselor development, and reactions by others with regard to the participants’ decision to be a counselor. The salient themes which emerged from an analysis of codes and categories were *adversity as a catalyst for growth, the ratio is not an accident, and human needs transcend social location.*

**Theme One: Adversity as a Catalyst for Growth**

For all participants, it became clear that the adversity they experienced as young men shaped at least some of the counselor identity development they are engaged in now. This adversity included patriarchal expressions of masculinity that they felt expected to fully live up to, yet in some ways fell short. They did not consciously choose to grow from the adverse experiences at the time they occurred, and none of the participants expressed appreciation for the intense learning these experiences created in the moment. The traits and characteristics that were natural to them were met with punishment and consequences instead of the affirmation and amplification they deserved, and for some participants this resulted in anger and resentment.
Upon reflection, often several years later, each described how they became stronger because of what they survived and that they now have the choice to move forward more powerfully and accept themselves for who they are. N.B. stated that, “I just work with my clients on this now, too, because for me, going through it and getting to the other side was powerful.” Two participants remarked that their early life experiences drove their present choice to become school counselors, to effect change and help young boys and men to have different experiences than they had.

One positive opportunity, though one that came with significant responsibility, occurred for young N.B. in taking on the role of “secondary parent” to his younger brother who had special needs, while his father was deployed or working away from home for months at a time and his mother worked full-time. This helped foster and expand his natural ability to care for others and develop empathy, an experience he recalled propelled him toward professions focused on helping others. For four of the participants, experience in their own personal counseling or having a personal connection to a counselor inspired their career trajectory toward the helping profession. Once in the program, the academic and clinical work involved helped solidify an initial career direction for each participant, even if counseling by itself might not be the ultimate long-term career path.

**Theme Two: The Ratio is Not an Accident**

Reflective of earlier comments, several participants maintain that there are gender differences between men and women, and that women naturally empathize better. In the participants’ estimations, women seem to have organic kindness and compassion and nurture others. These participants stated that men can do this too, but women do it *better*. Mark said it is
a good thing that men are increasingly open to atypical careers like counseling, learning more about women and issues that affect people who are different from them, and learning how to be more sensitive and emotionally aware. He also issued a call for men to get in touch with their own feelings and vulnerabilities, something that goes against role norms and stereotypes. This may pose a challenge, but it is important to acknowledge that men, especially cisgender, heterosexual, Latino men “…have feelings, and [they] will be hurt. And the only way that we're able to get through it, is to be open and honest with ourselves and others.” N.B. agreed that the ratio of men to women in counseling programs is understandable and even appropriate. He attributes this to historical gender role socialization and that men are simply behind the curve in their development of responsive and healthy emotionality. Even as he is a contextual minority in his classes, he said this has given him the opportunity to learn from a broader perspective and outside his usual scope. Specifically noting his ability to learn more about women and transpeople’s life experiences, he said, “I’ve tried to use my experience in every facet to kind of grow that understanding and see what it is that I might not understand, just simply because of who I am.” He hopes to see more men in the classroom as some of these false boundaries are broken down for boys at younger ages so they can develop the inherent skills they might possess in caring for others. Like Mark, N.B. asserted that men need to take the initiative to learn all they can and that they require more concentrated work to be good counselors. Cole reflected again on the need to be culturally competent and how pivotal this is for men. In his own experience, he struggled with white fragility and threats to his ego, but it was reflective of N.B.’s assessment of being behind the curve, rather than an unwillingness to engage in new and diverse learning opportunities. Floyd and Mitchell agree that the current ratio makes sense, but both commented
on the desire to have more men in the program to bond with, men who are more like them in
their commitment toward helping and more aligned with their relational values and aspirations.

**Theme Three: Human Needs Transcend Social Location**

All the participants recognized their ability to help clients who are working through daily
problems to clients who are in deep suffering. All cited that they are beginning to know how to
meet their clients where they are and respond to their needs, and as Mitchell reflected, “in a non-
expert Carl Rogers” sort of way. Over the course of the program, Mark grew in his capacity for
empathy and reflected that, “…it's the part in me that realizes people are people, and we all want
to be loved, and we all want to be heard and spoken to and listened to, and cared for, and treated
with empathy and genuineness.” Channing offered a holistic missive to future counselors:

…just take a breath and focus on the here and now, um, and I think that both goes for
counseling but in life as well. In that, we get all caught up in our own lives and our own
experiences and our own identities and our own um, trials and tribulations, and that if you
really take a pause and look at the core of counseling and that it is supposed to be a
human relationship that you're focusing on and building, that like that's what's most
important, and that it doesn't matter if you're male, female, somewhere else on the
spectrum, that um, it's about competency and empathy and congruence and all of those
other pieces.

**Summary**

Chapter Four provided a glimpse into the lives of seven counselors-in-training who are
men, part of the same graduate program at a large university in the Midwestern United States.
This interpretative phenomenological analysis was guided by the main research question and sub
research questions. In the analysis of the data, several themes emerged from the participants’
lived experiences and meaning making process about their gender.

The guiding research question inquired as to how participants described and made
meaning of their gender identity and expression. The first major theme that emerged from this
question was ease and complexity which yielded two subthemes: awareness of deeper complexity and complexity of expression. The second theme that emerged was gender as performance which elicited two subthemes: masculinity and femininity. The first research sub question asked participants to consider how participants perceive gender within their family and cultural communities. This question yielded four themes: super stereotypical stuff, parental influences, deviating from role norms and expectations, and seeking authenticity. The second research sub question asked participants what role (if any) the counseling program played in helping participants make meaning of their gender identity. The first major theme that emerged from this question was masculinity, manhood, and the patriarchy, which yielded two subthemes: rejecting toxic masculinity and being themselves. The second major theme that emerged from this question was cultural competence, which elicited two subthemes of intersectionality and tokening. The third major theme that emerged from this question was developing professionalism. Finally, the last research sub question asked participants what their perspectives are about gender as they train to be counselors. The first major theme elicited from this question was adversity as a catalyst for growth. The second major theme from this question was the ratio is not an accident, and the third major theme from this question was human needs transcend social location. Across the study, all seven participants spoke of the meaningful impact of gender in their lives and the benefit of reflection this study provided.

In Chapter Five, I will present a review and synthesis of the lived experiences of these counselors-in-training and the overall findings from this study. Utilizing feminist theory as the theoretical framework, I will explore how this study might shed light on how previous research compares to the current findings and how this research potentially adds to the current body of
literature. Additionally, I will offer implications and recommendations for future research on this topic as it relates to men in the counseling profession.
5. COMING TO A CLOSE

Introduction

This chapter contains the theoretical and contextual implications which emerged from the study’s findings and in it, I attempt to meaningfully address the guiding research question and sub questions. To assist in this process, I will attend to the review and synthesis of findings through the framework of feminist theory and the contents of the literature review. I will explore how this study might shed light on how previous research compares to the current findings and how this research potentially adds to the current body of literature. Additionally, I provide several implications for counselor educators and supervisors that add depth to the significance of this study. These participants’ experiences were dynamic, evolving, and meaningful throughout their program of study and clinical practice. They have valued their time as counselor trainees and are excited for the futures as professional counselors, yet their stories also create several opportunities for counselor educators to take a look at their own programs, to review their academic and clinical training practices, and strive to provide more inclusive spaces in which all students can show up and contribute their skills and talents.

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to understand the lived experiences of counselors-in-training who are men and how they described and made meaning of their gender inside contexts of their families and communities, the counselor training program, and the counseling profession. Across individual interviews with seven participants who identify as men in a masters-level CACREP-accredited counselor training program, qualitative data originating from the participants’ lived experiences and interpretations coalesced into the
following 12 superordinate themes and eight sub themes: (a) ease and complexity (awareness of deeper complexity, complexity of expression); (b) gender as performance (masculinity, femininity); (c) super stereotypical stuff; (d) parental influences; (e) deviating from role norms and expectations; (f) seeking authenticity; (g) masculinity, manhood, and the patriarchy (rejecting toxic masculinity, being themselves); (h) cultural competence (intersectionality, tokening); (i) developing professionalism; (j) adversity as a catalyst for growth; (k) the ratio is not an accident; and (l) human needs transcend social location.

**Review and Synthesis of Findings**

Exploring the lived experiences of men counselors-in-training was the intended phenomenon of this study. In their own ways, each of these men exemplified what it means to embody complexity, to break out of the norms they know they are expected to operate within, to choose courage over conformity, and to utilize the gifts and skills they have in order to help others. There are several threads connecting these men in their experience of the training environment given the structure of the program, but there is also a thread that connects them from early life. Each participant articulated being different from other boys as they grew up and were targeted for their “feminine” traits of sensitivity, compassion, care, and empathy. Some were overtly and covertly bullied, some turned inward and blamed themselves for external rejection and isolation, and some gave into the “toxic” or expected masculinity behaviors for a time in order to be accepted. Given the sub themes of “seeking authenticity” and “being themselves,” participants expressed a desire to break down these socialized gender barriers; however, the path forward was less clear. As many participants stated, thinking about gender and other cultural identities was fairly new to them and understanding the implications may take
time. At this stage in their lives, they are still grappling with this as they learn to authentically accept themselves.

An unexpected phenomenon that also emerged from this study was the interaction of the participants with the program in which they studied. As will be described below, the program provided the space for the men to learn more about themselves and their identities, to challenge the toxic masculinity and gender role expectations with which they struggled, and to develop authentic images of the individuals they were growing into. This phenomenon appeared as program-centric rather than a general byproduct of counselor training due to this program’s particular composition of faculty, students, curriculum, and substantive focus on multicultural and social justice education.

**Describing and Making Meaning of Gender**

Men in this study described with relative ease what their gender identities were and added to those labels in some cases with pronouns or with a caveat that they were just getting used to new gender terminology. If it applied to them, each used the term cisgender without being prompted. Just this small signifier uncovered some evidence of education participants were receiving in the counseling program and larger profession about the constellation of gender and a possible expansion of thinking about differing identities. Driven by the growing commitment by many graduate programs to train culturally competent counselors for the profession (Ratts, et al., 2016) as well as a built-in standard for CACREP-accredited counselor training programs (Woo, Henfield, & Choi, 2014), curriculum is increasingly being diversified to include discussion and dialogue on the needs and experiences of marginalized populations (Chang, et al., 2010; Crethar, et al., 2008; Evans, et al., 2005). The participants’ discussion of how they express their gender
and how others know them to be the gender they are highlighted the diversity within what seems on the surface to be a somewhat homogenous group, consistent with literature on between group and within group differences (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). This diversity reflected how contemporary generations are conceptualizing what gender looks like, how gender is discussed, and how far they are willing to push the boundaries of the contexts in which they exist.

Described more fully in the findings, several participants remarked that there were implicit or explicit boundaries provided to them by friends, family, and workplaces which created difficulties in negotiating their personhood. Vandello and Boson (2013) discussed the concept of *precarious manhood*, the risk that just one unmanly act can reverse how masculine a man is estimated to be. Burkley, Wong, and Bell (2016) layered on that, the concept of *masculinity contingency* that pairs a man’s self-worth with his sense of masculinity. These concepts may have affected the extent to which the men in this study pushed societal boundaries of gender expression. They demonstrated the presence of a personal and thoughtful cost/benefit analysis involving one or more factors in their given contexts or environments. These factors included: (a) geographical location; (b) the presence of a supportive group; (c) the amount of perceived consequence from others; and (d) the perceived benefit to clients and the therapeutic alliance.

Through this process of expanding or restricting their expression of masculine and feminine characteristics to fit various contexts, the men in this study illustrated gender expression as a performance. Each of them could cite at least one example where they amplified or minimized behaviors or affect to fit the factors listed above. Continually doing so prompted them to question the validity of the steadfastness with which gender boundaries are held in
society. As they moved through the counseling program and felt more supported to bring forth a multiplicity of characteristics, they gained more confidence in being themselves.

**Gender in the context of family and community.** Early caregivers figured prominently in the participants’ accounts of personality and behavioral development (Bandura, 1971) and allowances were afforded to them to explore who they were becoming. These caregivers were most often parents, but also siblings, and as participants grew, personal counselors, mentors, and influential others continued to help shape how the men understood themselves and made sense of who they wanted to be. However, with notable exceptions, many of these caregiving individuals also unintentionally replicated or perpetuated standards through sexist and heterosexist messages about how their children should think, feel, and behave (hooks, 2000), and in some cases these examples are providing the participants with desires to be different sorts of parents in the future.

Contemporary gender expectations are increasingly becoming less well-defined as in earlier generations, which can be seen as progress depending on one’s cultural lens. The participants in this study, most accurately placed within the millennial age cohort, are clearly creating their own definitions, expressions, and identities, something to be nurtured and cultivated. However, they continue to contend with pressures to conform to existing male norms. David and Brannon’s (1976) *Blueprint for Manhood* still holds impossible ideals for men to live up to in the expectations that they are 1) clearly masculine, 2) always striving toward success, 3) reliably sturdy and strong, and 4) always aggressive or action oriented. While many men do represent these characteristics and behaviors quite naturally and enthusiastically, many women and others of differing gender identities do as well. While many women embody characteristics
such as, overt empathy, kindness, compassion, and other ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982), so do many men (Elliott, 2016) and others of differing gender identities.

Seemingly outdated by the year of publication, these masculine ideals are nevertheless embedded in the social consciousness (Brooks & Silverstein, 1995) and may be unintentionally reinforced by faculty (Michel, et al., 2015) who trust that some students will just figure things out on their own, as Cole experienced. He certainly felt capable in many respects, but as someone who routinely experienced self-doubt and the fear of “getting it wrong,” he struggled a bit in the environment of a counselor training program where the stakes felt higher. He was soon to be responsible for the treatment of clients and he did not feel prepared. Instead, he felt his concerns and questions were dismissed and he was isolated in his process of inquiry.

Often disguised by masculine ideals, participants in this study exemplified that men can also experience imposter syndrome, a phenomenon more frequently attributed to women and other minority groups who achieve significant accomplishments but who also have significant self-doubt about their worthiness or the goodness of those accomplishments (Enns, 1992). While participants did not use the term imposter syndrome, they may encounter a gender-specific pressure to suppress imposter fears and conceal their self-doubt due to the societal rules of being men, even inside a relationally based training program where the assumption might be that it is easier to express these fears and concerns in a community of empathetic helpers. Part of the drive to be themselves and seek authenticity is an acknowledgement that they are multidimensional, fallible, and human. Their holistic selves contain the aspects of them that can be strong and confident, but also the aspects that are vulnerable and in need of support and care. One participant who took a journey from upholding “toxic” standards of masculinity to the more
emotional, empathic, “everyone needs a good cry” person he is today, illustrated that breaking down these boundaries revealed a healthier version of himself. This participant still identifies within a traditional expression of his manhood and gender role but created the room for more of who he is to exist.

**Gender in the context of the counseling program.** Many participants commented on the progressive environment of their counseling program and that there is a generous openness toward and acceptance of a variety of gender expressions; perhaps, as one participant remarked, stopping short of someone wearing offensively worded clothing to class. Still, individuals perceived environments differently based on their backgrounds and experiences. For the individuals who entered the program already expressing diverse ways of thinking, feeling, and being, a shorter period of acclimation seemed to be necessary with regard to program culture, classroom discussions, and professional expectations. Individuals who were less familiar with engagement in topics of diversity, self-reflection, and cultural competency seemed to choose to retreat inward and engage a little less often and a little more quietly. Both approaches depended on an assessment of individual safety and security in the new space of the counseling program. An environment cannot be declared a “safe space” for each individual who enters it and will not be claimed as such for everyone within it, but as an institution, the program can project a commitment to acceptance and affirmation of diverse identities and expressions, including a spectrum from the most conservative ideals to the most liberal. The extent to which the program establishes the guidelines for a civil and accepting space and encourages open dialogue, is likely the extent to which students will feel comfortable and willing to contribute (Crockett, et al., 2018). This program appeared to do a pretty good job of fostering awareness of social locations
and disseminating knowledge of cultural difference, but perhaps had some steps yet to take with applying theory to practice.

One clear and positive element the program emphasized was that of professionalism. Many participants commented on the benefit of developing as a professional and growing in their felt maturity and experience. From Channing’s social locations as queer and gender non-conforming, the concept of professionalism can be complicated in the workplace as professionalism closely follows the gender socialization norms of general society, something queer and trans people often disrupt. He still homed in on this topic as a beneficial negotiation between one’s fully authentic self and what is necessary to help others. He recognized through an awkward exchange with a colleague at work and with a client in session that his professional responsibility is to work through the countertransference insights he gains from their interactions so that his controllable behaviors and affect do not impede his working relationships.

This program also seemed to provide participants with the time and space to reflect on the effects of toxic masculinity in their lives and deepen their desires to not participate in it even while being subject to it. They all demonstrated some level of courage and bravery in standing up to it for themselves and others which requires a willingness to advocate, a goal of cultural competency. As this is just one program and results here will not generalize to the greater population of counseling programs, readers may inquire how well their own programs uncover the patriarchal and hegemonic behaviors of both men and women (Connell, 1990; Kimmel & Wade, 2018), faculty and students, as these contribute to a perpetuation of gender roles and expectations. These rules for behavior are often subtle, and may not look like toxic masculinity,
as characterized by impulsive posturing or outbursts of temper (Kupers, 2005), but serve the same purpose.

**Gender in the context of the counseling profession.** As these participants reflected on how far they had come in the program and considered their futures in the profession, they were each clear what they had been through. Adversity was a common theme to all of them, as was their own version of resilience. Through these sensitive and difficult experiences, they fostered their counselor qualities and grew in their skill development. Many chose to utilize a personal counselor for some part of their journey, which helped these participants conceptualize and heal past experiences as well as see this profession as an option for themselves. They are now in a unique and relatively small group, those who have sought professional counseling assistance and those who are soon poised to provide it (Evans, 2013; O’Neil, 2008; Parent, Hammer, Bradstreet, Schwartz, & Jobe, 2016; Wong, Ho, Wang, and Miller, 2017).

None of the participants expressed displeasure at the ratio of women to men in the counseling profession, and in fact, either agreed with it or understood it, but each noted its impact on him in a variety of ways. Many thoughts centered on moments of loneliness or isolation, not in consistent or overwhelming ways, but noticeably present nonetheless. The ratio may have assisted some men in embracing and performing more of their own feminine characteristics and be encouraged to further examine the gender socialization patterns that exist to limit or restrict their emotionality. Deeper friendships were forged with women in the program, yet a few participants commented that the presence of more men in the program may present more opportunities to bond over shared experiences.
Several participants wished to see more men join counseling programs but agreed on the uphill climb it might be due to the expectations for relational engagement, self-reflection, advocacy and social justice work, and sitting in others’ suffering. One participant said it would not be sufficient to just start pulling men off the street and admitting them into programs. They must be organically drawn to it and be willing to do their part in dismantling systems of oppression.

Implications for Practice

In light of the two phenomena which emerged from this study, that of the experience of being a man in counselor training, and the phenomenon of the role of the program in helping discern and deconstruct toxic masculinity and gender role socialization, there are several implications in the section to follow. These primarily reside with counselor educators and with the supervisors of counselor trainees at the doctoral and faculty levels as well as at external sites as these individuals are the most able to take action in light of the results and discussion of this research. Men who are thinking of applying to counselor training programs will be very unlikely to read this dissertation prior to filling out their applications, so these implications are not directed at them, but serve as a benefit to them in the long term. The men who are already enrolled in counselor training may see some of their own experiences in these pages, yet the emerging implications for them fall within the purview of these two leadership groups who may work to improve program delivery which serves to benefit them in the short term.

I organized the implications for counselor educators below in terms of (a) their continuing development of personal and professional cultural competency; (b) creating responsive strategies in classroom practices; (c) utilizing reflexive recruitment and retention; and
(d) crafting targeted program experiences for students that will intentionally include men. In
concert with the research experiences of Michel, et al. (2013), Michel et al. (2015), and Crockett
et al. (2018), studying the needs of men is not without controversy given men’s privileged place
in society, yet it is to the advantage of a more culturally representative student body that men’s
experiences be included in a meaningful way in counselor training programs.

**Counselor Educators**

Depending on the administrative hierarchy of respective institutions and departments,
counselor educators direct most aspects of the graduate training environment in which students
develop knowledge and learn and practice counseling skills. They hold a considerable amount of
power from the admissions review process to advising, teaching, supervision, and gatekeeping.
This power positions them with a significant responsibility in forming future counselors. Several
implications emerged from this study focusing on counselor educators and their role in training
men as counselors.

**Parallel reflexive process.** Counselor educators regularly ask students to reflexively
consider their cultural background and experiences in light of what they are learning in class and
guide them in how to apply that knowledge to their future work with diverse clients. Faculty and
doctoral-level instructors are also absorbing the text material and engaging in dialogue with their
students about cultural diversity. By reciprocally uncovering their own personal histories and
their thoughts about men, interrogating what it means to be a man in society, and more
specifically, understanding what it means to be a man in a woman-concentrated profession,
counselor educators will be able to use the results of this study to meaningfully review their own
perspectives on men as counselors and CITs. There may be hidden biases and stereotypes that
faculty hold about the ability of men to be counselors which could affect how they interact with the men in their classrooms, either overprivileging their contributions or isolating them in favor of students of other genders. If faculty utilize the MSJCCs (Ratts, et al., 2016) to develop a keen sense of their own thoughts, affects, and behaviors toward men, they may relate to all students in a balanced way. This personal understanding affects all other perceived implications.

Classroom practices. In this study, the perceived responsibility on the part of the program faculty to structure and deploy intentional and meaningful curriculum and activities toward cultural competence appeared to be relative according to the level of awareness participants brought into the program with them. The current level of information, dialogue, and opportunities for action seemed sufficient for men with little prior experience with cultural diversity but fell short for the men who were more advanced in their knowledge and who hoped for deeper engagement. However, those men who felt it sufficient also found it difficult to engage with classmates in sensitive conversations around sexual/affectional identities, race/ethnicity, and other deeper topics. They chose to remain silent in these dialogues either because they felt their voice would overtake that of a woman’s voice or because they did not know how to meaningfully contribute to the conversation given the lack of experience they had with diversity. The counselor educator who is attuned to this will more likely notice the segregated dialogue or rifts in conversation and be able to address tensions that arise.

Further, counselor educators will be able to assess the potential deconstruction of prevailing ideas about gender in the classroom and the power those ideas have over us. A lofty goal, this may help educators see students more closely from classroom to classroom, a practice which would reflect several feminist tenets, such as encouraging reflexivity, egalitarianism, and
dismantling the banking system of education (Freire, 1970), as discussions like these require that professors and educators engage in constructivist forms of dialogue with students and be mindful of their power and control (McAuliffe & Eriksen, 1999). Creating an environment such as this would help students of all genders feel comfortable framing responses from their backgrounds and lived experiences.

As noted earlier, the potential for a masked imposter syndrome in men emerged as a struggle some participants were left to explore alone. One participant remarked that the person-centered emphasis placed on working with clients would better begin with a student-centered focus in the program and classroom. If faculty are already doing this with students who are non-white, non-heterosexual, and non-cisgender as traditionally marginalized groups, providing more careful attention on how men students are doing in classes and asking if they might need additional processing time or a sounding board may alleviate the reticence to initiate the request for help. Additionally, attending more carefully to our classroom spaces would help reveal the gaps in creating truer cultural diversity and competency in counselor training. Part of this can be addressed through a continued recruitment effort for a more diverse student body. Statistics provided by CACREP (2019) indicate that this is positively increasing overall but continues to be a challenge.

Recruitment and admissions. These processes differ across the range of CACREP-accredited programs. In addition to the common application materials that usually include an essay of some kind detailing the applicant’s experience and why they want to be a counselor, some programs invite applicants to an interview day on campus where they engage in group or individual interviews with faculty. Some programs employ online methods to interview
applicants who cannot travel to campus or take meetings and conduct interviews with applicants to happen to be in town during the recruitment period. In whatever way the contact occurs, faculty have an opportunity to craft their discussions and questions with all applicants from a cultural competency perspective. This will help faculty to understand what the applicant might already know about diverse groups, personal biases and stereotypes, experience with and desires to work in diverse communities. If interviews are conducted in a group format, faculty reviewers will be able to observe nonverbal reactions to culturally oriented questions, and the engagement in dialogue between applicants. While these methods may not tell a reviewer everything they need to know about the applicant’s knowledge about and true aptitude toward cultural competency, it may uncover a sense of the applicant’s intentionality in learning more deeply about themselves and others and how social locations inform everyday decisions and choices. For applicants who are men, reviewers may be able to understand some of the effects of hegemonic masculinity inside a patriarchal society and may find ways to ask about how toxic masculinity has affected them throughout their lives. It may not be readily apparent to the applicant at that point but may plant a seed for further reflection. It is also not a guarantee that an applicant who provides a cogent and impressive interview will become a strong student in the program or a proponent of robust cultural competence. Faculty may need to step in as proactive mentors for students who struggle to grasp the concepts of cultural competency and building empathy for people who are different from them.

Despite the potential accuracy and relevance of interview responses, the short time spent with an applicant in the grand scheme of their interview process precludes the ability to predict with acuity what their actual abilities will be. The admissions process is a highly subjective one
and ultimately relies on the clinical and academic intuition of the reviewer. As a counselor educator and admissions decision-maker, I do not believe this relativity of perception of ability can be adequately accounted for prior to the students joining the program, but once they are in the program, conducting a survey of students’ existing levels of knowledge and awareness would help faculty to know where to concentrate their efforts in cultural education, as well as in ensuring students feel welcome to participate in class discussions no matter their level of prior knowledge. This may require a scaffolding process of vulnerability exercises toward the encouragement of voicing opinions, comments, or questions in class and other program spaces. This might also provide the necessary room for their own exploration of personally complex identity formations and self-affirmations of difference and diversity.

**Intentional program experiences.** A few participants remarked that being one of a handful of other men in the program felt isolating. They developed friendships with women and valued them, but there was a desire to form deeper friendships with men as well. This cannot be orchestrated as personality characteristics and shared interests determine the creation of relational bonds, but it may be beneficial to create opportunities in the program in which men students can socialize or to create program wide events to which men students are intentionally and specifically invited. Doing so may reduce the loneliness some men expressed in this study. Creating a student mentorship structure may also create connections and relationships across cohorts or between new students and more advanced students, as this is another form of role modeling. Students look to faculty for cues as to how they should be and do in their counseling program, but they also actively look to other students to teach them how to succeed in their training.
Counseling Supervisors

From the results of this study, it is evident that supervisors continue to be pivotal influences on counselor trainee development. Though each clinical experience is a potentially short period of time within the student’s program given the opportunity for multiple clinical experiences, the hours spent in supervision are no less instrumental in their learning process. Clear specifications for university supervision by faculty and/or doctoral-level counselor educators in training tends to be logistically easier to coordinate than that which occurs at an external internship site.

Participants had less to say about their site supervisors with regard to cultural competency, so for university-based supervisors, recommendations from the results of this study include: (a) placing greater attention on an awareness and respect for cultural complexity; (b) employing a keen cultural sensitivity and competency to their work with trainees; (c) possessing a willingness to understand trainees’ backgrounds and lived experiences, and (d) attending to the needs of all trainees and clarifying understandings. Counselors-in-training are working with a diverse set of clients in any given space and they need to understand the intricacies of client needs and worldviews which often starts with a deep process of self-reflection and dialogue about that reflection in supervision. Supervisors have the potential to gloss over or erase trainee and client concerns if they do not place greater emphasis on cultural diversity or enquire as to the importance of these to their supervisees as a model for the supervisee’s work with clients. This implication can be attended to through direct training and reflection on the MSJCCs (Fickling, et al., 2019; Ratts, et al., 2016), as well as routine requirements for cultural awareness experiences. An associated strategy would be to situate supervision practice within both critical and relational
frameworks. Taking a feminist multicultural approach to training and supervision would naturally encourage several intentional practices on the part of both the supervisor and the supervisee in encouraging self-reflexivity, challenging assumptions, analyzing power and control, incorporating lived experiences, and ensuring all voices are heard (MacKinnon, 2015; Wolf, et al., 2018). Utilizing these frameworks in the doctoral supervision course would help lay the foundation for deeper dialogues between doctoral supervisors and their masters-level trainees.

**Limitations**

Due to the nature of qualitative research, sample size is not necessarily a limitation because this is intended to particularize not generalize, but the diversity of the sample could be seen as such. Five of the seven participants in this study were white and heterosexual, thus providing a narrowed lens through which to view their experiences, something each of them acknowledged at least once. The bounded nature of the study naturally contributed to the demographics of the study participants, as well as the criteria that the participants be currently enrolled in clinical experiences. This necessarily reduced the number of eligible participants to solicit for interviews. It is unclear if the sample in this study was adequately representational of the population of men in this particular program due to a lack of clear demographic statistics.

**Trustworthiness**

Strategies for trustworthiness in this study included the amount of time spent with each participant, all choosing to extend beyond the minimum 60 minutes requested of them, and some choosing to exceed the cap of 90 minutes in order they might say everything they wished to say in one sitting. Reflexivity was a frequent strategy of trustworthiness and I utilized analytic
memos at several junctures of this research: prior to the first interview, after each interview, and as a parallel to the coding process to offset my personal cognitive or affective reactions to the material. As described earlier in this chapter, I specifically requested a process of member checking so that I and the participants could be assured that the transcripts were correct. I also attempted to represent the participants’ words frequently and with depth to ensure these provided evidence for my interpretations. Finally, Lincoln and Guba (2001) asserted that a bounded study such as mine as well as the prior experience I had with most participants was additive to the strategies for trustworthiness due to my prolonged exposure to the setting.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There are very few studies focused on this topic in the counseling literature for the understandable reason that men have long been the focus of and structure behind research in the counseling profession. In those few studies, together with mine, no obvious consensus on men’s experiences in counselor training programs has yet been reached, except that they value the opportunity to share their voice and will often feel isolated in their experiences due to their contextual minority status. Therefore, additional research is necessary to begin to achieve a fuller picture of the various phenomena affecting men as counselors-in-training in order that counselor educators can find a way forward in working specifically with this group.

As counseling program faculty apply the ethical and accrediting standards more explicitly in their programs and expand in their awareness, knowledge, and skills related to cultural competence, there is potential for a greater modeling of dialogue on gender and other social locations students embody. To that end, additional qualitative studies that focus on the lived experiences of men as they grapple with existing strictures of thinking, feeling, and behavior
outside counseling programs may help them develop more fully as themselves inside counseling programs. Conducting a study across several programs and geographical regions might provide a more representative sample of men and their lived experiences.

Further studies could also focus on the impact the lower number of men in the counseling profession might have on client populations. As the participants stated in this study in reference to their own learning process and need for understanding, representation matters. In an effort to study the learning outcomes of programs that closely utilize the MSJCCs (Ratts, et al., 2016), a targeted longitudinal research project could follow a particular cohort and observe their use of the competencies throughout classroom and clinical spaces to know how cultural competence develops over time and how it may be applied.

Finally, as stated in the limitations section, this study recruited only participants who had largely completed their programs, but there may be a different perspective on gender role socialization at the beginning of a student’s program than at the end. Additionally, early career professionals who graduated from their programs one to three years prior may rely more on their daily site experience than their academic knowledge in shaping their perspectives on gender and topics of diversity overall. Therefore, if a similar dialogue is not occurring in their clinical and school sites, the phenomena under study of their lived experiences may not center on their gender in the same way.

**Conclusion**

This study yielded rich and complex data from seven participants who shared broad and deep experiences about their gender from multiple contexts: (a) their family and cultural communities; (b) their masters-level graduate counselor training program, and (c) as they looked
ahead to their future careers. While many places and spaces were recognized as similar between
them, such in the classroom, practicum and internship experiences, and in faculty and doctoral-
level supervision, each provided his own perspective and the emphasis that these different areas
of experience, learning, growth, and identity held for them with regard to how they interpreted
this through the lens of gender. Taking a long view back to when they first entered as new
graduate students, all participants had positive experiences in the program overall and expressed
gratitude for what they have gleaning from these journeys. Through their generosity in sharing
their multidimensional experiences and understandings, they rose together in the woven whole of
this work. These participants continue to grapple with stereotypical expectations and
assumptions of their manhood but also clearly represent some of the liberatory possibility that
feminism and the women’s movement provide them. Though these academic and professional
understandings of gender socialization practices and concepts are new to most of the participants,
they demonstrated a willingness to take a deeper look at the effects of the power and control their
privilege affords them, how they were and still are affected by hegemonic masculinity and the
patriarchy, and how they might attempt to break down some of the artificial boundaries that exist
between genders. Engagement in this reflexivity, a striving toward egalitarianism, and a
commitment to provide space for marginalized voices fits some of the feminist tenets Fukuyama
et al. (2014) discussed in their research on feminism and intersectionality. The nature of
qualitative research provided a listening space for these participants to share their experiences,
but the dialogue within it shaped new learning and in vivo understandings. Qualitative research
as an intervention in itself proved meaningful in the exploration of these participants’ lived
experiences and provided an avenue for them to deconstruct how toxic masculinity has affected
each of them and that rather than continually give into society’s expectations of them, they are crafting how they will move powerfully forward in a more authentic being.

It is in the curiosity of lived experience that I sought to explore how men counselors-in-training experienced being men in a graduate program in which they were a contextual minority and how they describe and make meaning of their gender and how it fits within various contexts. In the preparation of this dissertation, the perceived significance of this study continued to grow with each passing day and with each conversation held about my research with those around me. Counselor educators were intrigued by my potential findings and initially saw a clear contribution to the literature. What was anecdotal is now grounded in and contributes to the existing research with several implications for counselor educators and counseling supervisors that may make real differences for current and future students. The findings here are meaningful for men who are engaged in counselor training, and while it may have been impossible to fully represent every aspect of my participants’ experiences in these pages, I hope that readers found a comprehensive glimpse into these unique perspectives on their time in the counselor training program and a sense of relatedness with their experiences.
References


APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Title of Study: Men’s Lived Experiences in Counselor Training Programs: A Phenomenological Investigation

Investigators
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Key Information
- This is a voluntary research study on the lived experiences of men counselors-in-training.
- This phenomenological study involves a single 90-minute interview.
- The benefits include gaining insight into the experience of being a man in a counselor training program and developing a deeper understanding of their personal definitions of gender and masculinity. In addition to this, the participants will be given a $15 gift card to the retailer of their choice, such as Amazon or Starbucks. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks involved in this study.

Description of the Study
I am seeking to understand the experiences of counselors-in-training who are men (ideally those who are currently in their clinical experiences or those who completed the program within 3 months of this study and have a significant portion of their program upon which to reflect). It is my hope that the current study will increase understanding of how men navigate a program and a profession that is comprised mostly of women.

The knowledge gained from this study may enhance the ability of Counselor Education faculty to more effectively prepare and support men in their personal and professional development over the course of their programs as well as aid in a deepening of culturally competent practice.

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

1) Complete brief demographic questions containing no identifying information
2) Choose a pseudonym and be prepared to mask the identities of anyone you discuss in the interview
3) Agree to be audio and/or video recorded (leaving the camera off is the right of the participant)
4) Participate in a single individual interview lasting no more than 90 minutes
5) Review the completed transcript of the interview for accuracy.

Risks and Benefits
The study has no reasonably foreseeable (or expected) risks. The broad benefits of participation are that the results of this work may assist faculty across counseling programs to know more about the experiences of men students and to continue efforts ensuring that all voices in the classroom are being heard and supported from a multicultural perspective (Liu, 2005). In
addition, purposeful striving to increase the number of men counselor trainees and men future professional counselors could mean that clients will have a greater diversity of practitioners available to them in counseling spaces. An increase in diverse clinician representation may continue efforts to lessen the stigma of help-seeking by men (Evans, 2013; Parent, Hammer, Bradstreet, Schwartz, & Jobe, 2016; Wong, Ho, Wang, and Miller, 2017). Finally, this study may prompt counselor educators to interrogate their personal beliefs about men, what it means to shift the gender balance of their programs, and what true role social justice and multiculturalism play in educating and training future professional counselors.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. The participant will not record their real name or identifying information in print or verbally during the interview. They will be asked to select a chosen pseudonym prior to the interview and similarly mask any individuals they may discuss during the course of their interview. Audio and/or video recordings will be stored electronically on NIU’s secure password-protected Office 365 OneDrive. Only the investigator of this study will have access to the recordings. Once the participant approves their transcribed interview, which will already be anonymized due to the pseudonym(s), the associated recording will be permanently deleted. The researcher will not include any information in any report they may publish that would make it possible to identify you. While in use, the transcripts will be maintained in a locked file that only the researcher will have access to. Upon completion of the dissertation process (successful oral defense), the transcripts will be shredded.

Compensation
As an expression of appreciation for the time commitment and participation in this research study, each interviewee will receive a $15 gift card to their choice of Amazon or Starbucks after reviewing and approving the completed interview transcript. The participant will be given a redemption code for their chosen gift card retailer.

Your Rights
The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without penalty. You have the right to skip any question or research activity, as well as to withdraw completely from participation at any point during the process. You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the researcher, Suzanna Wise at z1754814@students.niu.edu or by telephone at 240-441-1127 or the dissertation advisor, Melissa J. Fickling, Ph.D. at 815-753-9304 or mfickling@niu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators or if you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety at (815)753-8588.

Future Use of the Research Data
After removing all identifying information from your interview transcript, the information could be used for future research studies on the same topic but using a different analysis method to
interpret the data or it could be distributed to another investigator for future similar research studies without additional informed consent from you.

**Disclosure of Research Results to Participants**
Participants are free to request the completed research results from the investigator.

Your verbal consent during the interview indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. Your additional verbal consent during the interview indicates that you will allow audio/video or audio-only recording.
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT INVITATION
Good day!

I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program at NIU. I received your name and contact information from ______________ as someone who may be willing to participate in my dissertation study. I am in the data collection phase of my research and I am seeking masters-level counselors-in-training to participate in my study titled: “Men’s Lived Experiences in Counselor Training Programs: A Phenomenological Investigation.” This study fulfills part of the requirements of my Ph.D. degree and has been approved by the Northern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB# HS20-0199).

It is my hope that the current study will increase understanding of how men navigate a program and a profession that is comprised mostly of women. The knowledge gained from this study may enhance the ability of CES faculty to more effectively prepare and support men in their personal and professional development over the course of their programs as well as aid in a deepening of culturally competent practice. I am specifically attempting to understand the experiences of counselors-in-training who are in practicum or internship, or those who are within three months of graduation because there are ensured to be several courses and clinical experiences upon which to reflect during the interview.

I have attached a few documents for your review, but there is nothing to return to me ahead of time. If you are interested in participating, I will confirm your assent to participate in the study and your assent to record the interview in our scheduled meeting. I will ask the few demographic questions located in the attached form:

1. The IRB-approved consent form
2. A brief demographic questionnaire, which includes a request that you choose a pseudonym for yourself. When the interview begins, I will ask you for this name in order to mask your identity in the recording and on the transcript. I would also request that you create pseudonyms for anyone you speak about in your interview to also mask their identities.
3. The interview guide - this is not prescriptive, but I would like you to have a chance to consider some of your responses ahead of time.

If you agree to the above, our interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes at a day and time that works for you. Due to geographical distance and to aid in your convenience, I will send you a link to a Zoom meeting, which will not require any software downloaded to your computer, though you have the option to do so.

Once the interview is complete, I will create a transcript and email it to you for your review. Upon your approval of the transcript copy, I will delete the recording of our interview. In addition, as a token of my appreciation for your time commitment to this research study and your transcript review, you will receive a $15 gift card to your choice of retailers, such as Amazon or Starbucks.

You are under no obligation to participate and there is no penalty for non-participation. If, after considering all of the above information, you are interested in being a part of this study, please
contact me at your earliest convenience at swise@niu.edu or 240-441-1127. For more clarification or additional questions about the research, please contact me or my dissertation director, Melissa J. Fickling, Ph.D. (mfickling@niu.edu).

Thank you very much!
Suzy Wise, Ed.S., LPC(IL), NCC
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking part in this study. For the purpose of this research, I propose to explore how men make sense of their current experience in their masters-level CACREP-accredited counselor training programs. This interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes and I would like it to occur as more of a conversation about your experiences than a strict interview. I prepared several questions to get us started. There are no right or wrong answers and you can respond in the way that feels comfortable for you. We are audio- and video-recording the interview today and I assure you that these artifacts will be kept in secure electronic files until such a time as the transcripts are produced and approved by the participants and the recordings will be destroyed. At the close of the research project, the transcripts will additionally be destroyed. You are using a pseudonym here today and providing pseudonyms for anyone you discuss in the interview, so only I, as the researcher, will know that you participated in this study. I would also like to share a little bit about myself with you. I identify as a woman and I am a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education and Supervision. I am also a full-time faculty member in a masters-level CACREP-accredited program. Gender will figure prominently in our interview today as well as the experiences you have had in your master’s program so far, and your role as a future counselor. Do you have any questions or concerns at this point? Please let me know if any come up for you during the interview.

1) What program track are you on? Is graduation imminent?
   a) What are your areas/populations of interest within the profession of counseling?
      What draws you toward those?
2) Walk me through your experience in the counseling program so far.
   a) Highs and lows?
   b) Any events or things that stick out to you?
   c) What have been your favorite aspects of the counseling program?
3) What led you to pursue counseling as a professional career?
   a) How did you come to that decision?
   b) What have important figures in your life said about your decision?
4) What were your expectations for the counseling program prior to joining it?
   a) How did you hope it would be?
5) How do you currently define and describe your gender identity?
   a) How do you currently express your gender identity?
   b) What do you appreciate most about your gender? What do you not appreciate?
6) In what ways has your gender informed your experience in the counseling program?
   a) …in the classroom?
   b) …in faculty supervision?
   c) …in your placement site(s)?
7) Thinking back to your childhood just a bit, what were common thoughts about gender as you were growing up?
   a) What models or representations of men or boys were salient for you then?
   b) What explicit messages about gender existed in your cultural communities? How about implicit?
8) What is it like for you now to be a man? How would you describe yourself now compared to as you were growing up?

9) What other intersectional identities do you hold?
   a) What is it like to be a (man of color, LGBQ+ man, disabled man) in the communities in which you live, study, and work?

10) When you interact with others in your personal/leisure/work life outside of the program, what are the messages you sense or receive from others about your decision to be a counselor?
    a) How did you describe the field of counseling to them?
    b) What do you know are their perceptions of who a counselor is?

11) What would you consider to be your characteristic strengths as you prepare to be a counselor?
    a) How are these characteristics influencing how you are developing as a counselor?
    b) Can you describe a recent counseling session you had with client of another gender? How do you perceive your differing genders may have impacted your session or your therapeutic relationship?

12) What are some changes you have noticed in your personal life as a result of being a man in this program?
    a) How did the counseling program help shape your knowledge and experience of gender?
    b) How is your practicum/internship placement shaping your experience of gender?

13) What is it like for you to talk to me like this?
    a) Are there any questions you wish I would have asked or additional information you would like to share with me?

14) What essences from your story do you hope I take away from our time here together and incorporate in my research?
    a) How do you hope my reader sees you?
APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
Demographic Questionnaire

Participant pseudonym: ___________________________________

Age: ______

Racial/Ethnic Identity: ______________________________________________

Sexual/Affectional Orientation/Identity: ________________________________

1) CACREP Core Curriculum Completed to Date (Please check all that apply)
   a) Orientation and Ethics
   b) Social and Cultural Diversity
   c) Human Growth and Development
   d) Career Development
   e) Counseling and Helping Relationships (Skills)
   f) Group Counseling and Group Work
   g) Assessment and Testing
   h) Research and Program Evaluation

2) Clinical Experiences Completed (or enrolled in) to Date (Please check all that apply)
   a) Practicum
   b) Internship I
   c) Internship II

3) Graduated Within Past Three Months?
   a) Yes
   b) No
APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL NOTICE
Approval Notice
Initial Review

18-Dec-2019

TO: Suzanna Wise (01754814)
Counseling, Adult and Higher Education

RE: Protocol # HS20-0199 “Men’s lived experiences in counselor training programs: A phenomenological investigation”

Your Initial Review submission was reviewed and approved under Member Review procedures by the Institutional Review Board on 18-Dec-2019. Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval period: 18-Dec-2019 - 17-Dec-2020

If your project will continue beyond that date, or if you intend to make modifications to the study, you will need additional approval and should contact the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity for assistance. Continuing review of the project, conducted at least annually, will be necessary until you no longer retain any identifiers that could link the subjects to the data collected. Please remember to use your protocol number (HS20-0199) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Unless you have been approved for a waiver of the written signature of informed consent, this notice includes a date-stamped copy of the approved consent form for your use. NIU policy requires that informed consent documents given to subjects participating in non-exempt research bear the approval stamp of the NIU IRB. This stamped document is the only consent form that may be photocopied for distribution to study participants.

It is important for you to note that as a research investigator involved with human subjects, you are responsible for ensuring that this project has current IRB approval at all times, and for retaining the signed consent forms obtained from your subjects for a minimum of three years after the study is concluded. If consent for the study is being given by proxy (guardian, etc.), it is your responsibility to document the authority of that person to consent for the subject. Also, the committee recommends that you include an acknowledgment by the subject, or the subject's representative, that he or she has received a copy of the consent form. In addition, you are required to promptly report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems or risks to subjects and others. The IRB extends best wishes for success in your research endeavors.