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# Male counseling students' perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty

Jody L. Huntington

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

MALE COUNSELING STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF  
FEMALE CLIENTS, PEERS, AND FACULTY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Jody L. Huntington

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences  
Department of Counselor Education and Supervision

May 2012

This Dissertation by: Jody L. Huntington

Entitled: *MALE COUNSELING STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE CLIENTS, PEERS, AND FACULTY*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in the Department of Counselor Education and Supervision.

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## ABSTRACT

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The focus of this case study was to better understand male counseling students' perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty and how those perceptions impacted their interactions. Gender is a significant factor in the counseling relationship, and our culture; gender and gender stereotypes play a large role in our lives and our interactions.

Understanding male counseling students' perceptions of females could help to inform the current state of gender awareness and sensitivity in counseling training and education.

Ten male, graduate counseling students engaged in two semi-structured interviews, responded to four journal prompts, and provided artifacts in order to gain an understanding of their current perceptions of women, specifically, their female clients, peers, and faculty. The data were subsumed into the following 15 broad categories then synthesized into nine themes: *Importance of Gender in Counseling; Gap in Gender Training; Men and Women are Different; Women, the Softer Half; Looks Matter, for Women; Patriarchy's Oppression of Men; It's Not Men's Fault, Women have the Power; Lack of Self-Awareness and Contradictions; and You Can't Trust Most Women.* These themes were organized into three findings, The Need for Training and Education; Sex Bias and Sexism in Counseling; and Men's Response to Sexism, to discuss the findings and recommendations.

According to the findings, there was a critical need for intentional focus on gender issues in counselor education and training to address gender issues, biases, stereotyping, the need for increased sensitivity, and the importance of counselor self-awareness. This study provided additional support for the increased emphasis on gender issues for counselors in training, because gender is a key element in counseling relationships. Implications and recommendations included specifics surrounding gender education and training, and professional development and accountability of faculty as it relates to gender.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a journey this has been. My parents taught me how to work hard – physically, but I can honestly say this is the hardest I have ever worked completing this project – at least mentally! For the most part, it has been an enriching and rewarding experience. These last few months of compiling and writing my findings and editing the last chapters have been difficult for me. It has felt like I have been pregnant and seriously overdue. The last several months I have purposely isolated myself from extended family and friends, as a method to protect my time and energy so that I could ensure I had enough to put toward this endeavor. Initially, this made sense to me and did provide me the necessary space to do the work I needed to get done. However, the last month or so this tactic has felt less than helpful. It has become increasingly lonely, and I became acutely aware of how important my family and friends are in my life and how meaningful and important those relationships are to me.

Throughout my time and work on this degree, two people have been with me every step of the way, and they are my husband, Matt and my son, Forrest. I know the two of them have had to make some sacrifices because of my investment in this work. Matt and Forrest have been supportive of me and my efforts, and this meant a great deal to me. Matt, I think you already know this, but I believe I could not have achieved this milestone without you and your multifaceted support. I love you and thank you! Other family members including my step-son, Schon, and his wife, Laura, my sisters, Debbie, Shirlee, Brenda, and Tammy (who has been my sounding board, counselor, friend, and

sister!), and my parents, Sam and Joyce, have each offered support to me in a variety of ways for which I am very grateful. In addition to their support, I want to thank my family of origin, my parents, Sam and Joyce, my brother, Doug, and my sisters, Debbie, Shirlee, Brenda, and Tammy for contributing to who I am and how I approached this topic of gender. I truly feel blessed to be a part of our family and am honored to hold the position of youngest child and sibling, as I have gained so much from each of you and your experiences – thank you and I love each of you.

Many friends have been there for me along this journey. Friends, I hope you know how much each of you mean to me and how important you are to me and in my life. My PhD cohort, Tom, Reggie, Ron, and Shawn have been supportive and respectful of my interpretation and views on this topic and have graciously contributed to my project – for this and for the experiences we shared throughout our program, I thank you. My colleagues at Regis University, thank you for your continued support and kindness throughout this endeavor, especially Tom, who has played a dual role as part of my cohort and now colleague. Thank you for being a partner going through this process, for really sharing with me the trials and tribulations, and the celebrations of this achievement.

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convey to you in terms of how you have impacted and shaped my life and my career path. Since my master degree program, you have been a mentor and a guide to me in many ways. I am eternally grateful to all you have done for me and all you given me. You are a tremendous role model, and I have great respect for your passion, tenacity, and advocacy, for not only me, but for other students and our profession. I hope someday I can give to someone else what you have given to me.

Now, I must close with my favorite quote. Having now completed this very important, difficult, and rewarding task, I return to...

*“And what is as important as knowledge?” asked the mind.*

*“Caring and seeing with the heart” answered the soul.*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As a female, graduate student in a counselor education and supervision program, I became increasingly conscious of and interested in males' perceptions of women, particularly based on women's behavior and appearance. My curiosity about this topic intensified over the last couple of years, while I was the only female in a cohort of five students in a doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision. My interest was piqued during my year-long practicum experience, when I was repeatedly exposed to situations in which my male peers made comments about females that perplexed me and at times troubled me. I recall a particular time when three of us (myself and two male peers) were observing, behind a one-way mirror, a male peer who was in a counseling session with a young, attractive female. A discussion evolved amongst my male peers as to whether or not this young female was attracted to the male counseling student. The basis of the discussion was on the way the client was dressed. The female client was wearing a spaghetti string tank top and shorts. The supervising faculty member, a woman, speculated that the female client may have been attracted to the male student as well. The comments and reactions of my male peers and the supervising faculty member astounded me because they specifically related their speculations as to the female client's attire and nothing else, not her behavior or the content of her speech. From what I observed on campus, spaghetti string tank tops and shorts were fairly common attire among the female college students, so what led my male peers to make this assumption

about this client? And, if the client's attire was the only evidence to suggest potential attraction to the male counseling student. The thought that the female client may have been attracted to the male counseling student would have seemed more plausible and something to note had the client displayed some behavior or said something to the male counseling student that seemed to indicate attraction. In that moment, I questioned what meaning people may infer about me, my actions, and other women, simply based on how we were dressed. A second incident occurred when one of my male peers in the program disclosed he was distracted in the classroom when a female faculty member, with a slim physique wore a short skirt. My reaction to these and other experiences led me to ask; who was responsible for the reactions to and perceptions of the way women dress - the person who decided what to put on her body or the observers?

What struck me about these and other incidents were the assumptions of women's motives based on their appearance. An abundance of research exists depicting how men think about sex more often than women, and how men tend to sexualize situations more often than women intend (Abbey, 1982; Koukounas & Letch, 2001; Snell & Papini, 1989); meaning men may perceive women's actions with more sexual overtones than projected. I wondered if this was what I had encountered with my peers. Upon further discussion with a couple of my male peers, I came away with three insights: (a) men were likely to make assumptions about women based on how they are dressed; (b) men were likely to believe their assumptions about women's intentions based on their attire and appearance were true; and (c) men were likely to believe that a woman may or may not be conscious of the implications of the way she dresses. I felt a multitude of emotions in reaction to these discussions; anger, curiosity, confusion, fear, and disbelief.

Prior to this experience, I had never claimed to be a feminist and never really thought much about being a woman, in the sense of being compared to men or being oppressed in society. Many women, like myself, are seemingly unaffected by the troubles women once faced and without consideration, accept and reap the benefits of the work of our foremothers and foresisters. One factor that has contributed to this trend is class privilege and a sense of endless possibilities that women experience today (Aronson, 2003; Crossley, 2010). Another factor may be that gender inequities and sexism are presently quite subtle, to the point they can be difficult to recognize.

Additionally, in the media and popular culture, a message has been perpetuated that feminism is no longer necessary or even that earlier efforts actually failed. Bromley and Ahmad (2006) noted examples of messages in public venues and for political purposes that undermined feminist efforts; such as depicting disagreements between feminist activists as adversarial wars and assigning negative connotations with the word “feminism”. Often, women who do agree with and support a feminist agenda retreat from identifying as a feminist because of negative and unpopular connotations surrounding the “feminist” label (Aronson, 2003; Crossley, 2010). These individuals are referred to as “fence-sitters” and “free-riders” (Aronson, 2003; Crossley, 2010). I, like many women, may have unintentionally insulted the individuals who worked hard to initiate the changes women experience today. We have simultaneously taken part in a culture where being treated unfairly is offensive, while unconsciously weighed the advantages of sexism and learned to discount select offenses for the rewards gained by them. As summarized by Crossley (2010), “The ability to assert feminist opinions one moment and to take advantage of traditional gender roles the next has, for many women,

become the nucleus of contemporary enactments of feminism” (p. 129); what will women or I sacrifice in accepting this stance?

At the time I performed my initial literature review for this study, I stumbled upon graphic pictures of women in sexually submissive and victimizing positions. These pictures, although not directly related to my topic, piqued my interest and fueled my passion to research the topic of gender perceptions in more detail. I saw the photos of these women as a link to the phenomenon of gender awareness, and one could surmise a factor which influences society and how women are perceived.

Specifically, I discovered pictures of young, attractive, Caucasian, stylishly dressed women being aggressively and forcefully handled by police officers, with weapons, including guns, and one with a ferocious looking police dog ready to attack. Two of the seized women’s faces showed looks of trepidation and anguish. All four of the women were hurled in submissive and sexual positions (Willer, 2008), their clothes placed to expose cleavage, legs, and thighs all the way up to their crotches.

These pictures were from a September 2006 fashion spread in the popular *Vogue* magazine (Willer, 2008). I looked at the pictures in horror and disgust. It had been awhile since I perused a fashion magazine, but I could not recall either seeing this type of exploitation of women, or paying attention to it previously. I suspended my research for a period of time to call my sister. I asked her if her daughter, my 13 year old niece, looks at women’s fashion magazines, and I proceeded to tell her about this article I just discovered and how this researcher revealed a plethora of instances where women are subjugated and sexualized in fashion magazines (Willer, 2008). I wondered how this representation of women in a popular fashion magazine affect the way all women are



viewed and judged. I am struck by the enormity of the possible implications of these depictions of women. I am motivated to search for and gain a better understanding of how women are impacted by this and other factors which culminate into disadvantages based on gender.

I returned to the focus of my inquiry, realizing that although not directly examining women's fashion or fashion magazines, the portrayal of women in fashion and media impacts the way society scrutinizes women, and powerfully impacts all facets of life, for males and females. Willer (2008) astutely pointed out "...it is unfortunate for women who are fully clothed in their day to day life; for there are images circulating in popular media that imply that they are still highly sexualized objects" (p. 4). Our society's collective unconscious and psyche are likely influenced by the popular culture and the mores created as a result.

Another manifestation of popular media which objectifies women is music. Like fashion magazines, music influences young people. Bretthauer, Zimmerman, and Banning (2006), noted that themes of violence, objectification, and power over women in lyrics have been on the rise since 2000. Evidence of this can be found in the lyrics of a song by a United States crunk rap duo, the Ying Yang Twins. In 2005 their song, Wait (The Whisper), hit number 15 on the Billboard Hot 100. Below is a sample of the lyrics:

You like to fuck, have yo legs open all in da butt  
Do it up slappin ass cuz the sex gets rough  
Switch the positions and ready to get down to business  
So you can see what you've been missin'  
You might had some but you never had none like this  
Just wait til you see my dick  
Ay bitch! wait til you see my dick  
Wait til you see my dick  
Ay bitch! wait til you see my dick  
Imma beat dat pussy up

Ay bitch! wait til you see my dick  
Wait you see my dick  
Ay bitch! wait til you see my dick  
Imma beat dat pussy up

If lyrics and music help shape the construction of gender in society, then what do lyrics such as these construct for women? These lyrics and other forms of popular media perpetuate the objectification of women. Often, women are placed in situations of reduced power and positions of subordination, and sexual violence toward women is condoned. Since I do not listen to these types of songs or regularly look at fashion magazines, I was not aware of these blatant demonstrations of sexism. Like other forms of oppression, the objectification of women may be obvious, but throughout this investigation I have realized it may be much more subtle and, like other forms of oppression (e.g., microaggressions), difficult to detect for the target.

### **Statement of Problem**

Gender is an attribute that contributes to one's credibility and for females may negatively impacts one's standing (Brown, Cervero, & Johnson-Baily, 2000). In addition to gender, women are often judged by outward appearances (i.e., attire, looks (lookism), age, and sexuality). The consequences of evaluations of women based on these and other criteria are often not beneficial, and frequently harmful.

A review of literature and popular culture supports the inclusion of gender education as a component of counselor training and education (Daniluk, Stein, & Bockus, 1995; Hoffman, 1996), and these works are over a decade old. It is important for counselor educators and supervisors to remain sensitive to gender issues, informed and knowledgeable on the topic in order to provide culturally competent and social justice focused education to successive generations of counselors. Comstock, Duffey, and St.

George (2003) suggested, "...counselor educators should model gender sensitivity in all aspects of counselor education" (p. 63).

Gender is particularly important in counseling and counselor education, as we strive to be culturally competent and aware of our role in social justice. Social justice is used in the context for counselors, similar to commonly defined, as the commitment to work for equity of all, paying particular attention to power differences among individuals and groups (McAuliffe, Danner, Grothaus, & Doyle, 2008). As Comstock et al. (2003) reminded us "...gender is a key component of privilege..." (p. 71) and noted further "Without question, students view counselor educators as role models and expect them to apply the philosophies they teach" (p. 76). Comstock et al.'s (2003) comments suggest that educators may be able to initiate change in students and ultimately the public by training counselors who are sensitive to gender and sexism issues.

In general, and in counselor education and training, gender and sexism issues seem to be relatively avoided or understated, and hence, women may continue to suffer from the consequences of their personhood being either degraded or undervalued. It may not be just counselor education and training programs that seem to fail to pay attention to gender concerns. The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) code of ethics lists gender along with other areas of diversity, as a contextual variable requiring sensitivity; however, researchers have suggested that gender issues were not getting adequate attention in training programs (Haddock, Zimmerman, & MacPhee, 2000) and in fact may be weakening (Goodrich & Silverstein, 2005). Goodrich and Silverstein (2005) noted that although most AAMFT program representatives maintain they are meeting the requirements of including gender, there is a

noticeable absence of gender and gender related topics at national conferences and in published journal articles. Some of the reasons cited by Goodrich and Silverstein (2005) for the lack of attention to the topic of gender were the focus on multiculturalism; an infusion of gender throughout a program, rather than a separate course; and women have historically taught gender and feminism courses, and current faculty may not support the priority of gender and feminist concerns.

Continuing to pay attention to gender and in particular the affects of being female in society, such as oppression and sexism, is an ethical and moral obligation of professional counselors. I fear the subtlety of sexism and the backlash toward feminism poses an excuse to not afford the appropriate time and attention the topic deserves in counselor training and supervision. Ironically, gender is a part of every interaction, and in an intimate counseling setting, sexuality is a real and perpetual issue. Why would counselors overlook gaining a greater understanding and ability to address issues related to gender and sexuality in a mature, professional, healthy manner, and in a way in which particularly women are not subjected to further objectification?

Therefore, through this study, I gathered information to better understand male counseling student's perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty and how those perceptions impact their interactions to possibly diminish microaggressions toward women. By perceptions, I mean a person's objective and subjective, internal and external, and intentional and involuntary impressions. Microaggressions are described in the literature as subtle and often unintentional indignities toward individuals or groups based on particular characteristics, such as race or gender (Sue, 2007).

### **Significance of the Study**

Gender and gender perceptions are important dimensions in counseling and the counseling relationship. Counselors have an ethical responsibility to be competent in the area of gender and gender issues (Remley & Herlihy, 2010). In our culture, individuals are influenced by gender stereotypes and gender socialization which have created and demonstrated a less desirable situation for females (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel, 1970). Therefore, from a multicultural and social justice perspective it is critical that counselors are aware of their own gender biases and perceptions to avoid the potential of unwittingly contributing to the continued oppression of women. Gender concerns in counseling and sensitivity toward female clients' issues do not exclude female counselors; "...women and men are equally influenced by gender role socialization experiences that, if left unexamined, can lead to gender discrimination and incompetent counseling practices" (Remley & Herlihy, 2010, p. 61); however, based on male privilege, male responsibility cannot be overlooked or ignored. I chose to focus on male counselors and their perceptions because of the traditional power differential between men and women that exists and the increased propensity for boundary violations between male counselors and female clients (Remley & Herlihy, 2010), which are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

### **Guiding Questions**

Male graduate counseling students were interviewed to gain insight and clarity about their current perceptions of women, specifically their female clients, peers, and faculty. Additionally, I sought to gain a greater understanding of their experiences through the use of participant and researcher journaling. The over arching questions that

guided this study were: What are male counseling students' perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty? How might those perceptions impact their interactions and beliefs about female clients, peers, and faculty?

### **Rationale**

In the following chapter a historical account of women's subjugation is presented, along with literature that supports the details of the past and present objectification of women. Counselor ethics give reason to consider and attend to inequity of women and gender bias.

Counselors are called by their training, standards of practice, and ethical codes to be advocates and models of social justice and consciousness (Pack-Brown, Thomas, & Seymour, 2008). This call is evidenced by the following statement drawn from a chapter on social justice, "Counselors then must work to eliminate biases and to change attitudes and institutional policies that promote inequity" (McAuliffe, Danner, Grothaus, & Doyle, 2008, p. 47). Further, standards for program accreditation including the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) require programs to include gender awareness and sensitivity as an area of expected competence (Comstock et al., 2003; Myers, Borders, Kress, & Shoffner, 2005). Yet, despite calls to the profession and accreditation standards, a gap continues to exist between the expectations of cultural competency and social justice and its practice, particularly related to gender issues (Goodrich & Silverstein, 2005, Kees et al., 2005).

Individuals educated and trained as counselors are expected to be catalysts in the area of gender appreciation and have the opportunity to be agents of change in the area of gender oppression. This type of advocacy requires an environment of "...understanding,

compassion, and trust” (Comstock et al., 2003, p. 67) be created and proliferated. Few structures, theories or resources exist to address these concerns, A Relational Model of Gender Awareness Development, created by Comstock et al. (2003), is one structure that may aid in facilitating and normalizing the process of gaining a better understanding of and sensitivity to gender issues. Similarly, feminist therapy is a specific approach that considers gender in a social justice context (Robinson-Wood, 2009). Regardless of theoretical orientation or use of models, counselors have an obligation to be aware of concerns related to social justice and advocacy. This was declared clearly in the Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ), a division of the American Counseling Association, position statement in regards to the inclusion of the Advocacy Competencies (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002) in counselor education and training. Sexism was specifically mentioned in the competencies as a form of oppression, which counselors have a responsibility to be equipped to confront and address (Lewis et al., 2002).

The opportunities and impact of counselors working within an advocacy and social justice framework are far reaching, from faculty to students, from counselors to clients and their families, and to society as a whole. Change is never straightforward or instantaneous, and a momentary glimpse at history illuminates the importance of being courageous and diligent in moving toward transformation and discovery.

Much of the gender and counseling literature reviewed for this study focused on how gender impacted clients, however, I included peers and faculty in my inquiry with the intention of broadening the scope to possibly mediate less socially desirable responses from participants.

### **Delimitations**

For this study, I chose to focus on male participants who are currently enrolled in CACREP counseling preparation programs. Selection of CACREP accredited programs provided consistency across training and education requirements. Examining males' perceptions of women is important because, given our patriarchal society, that is where the genesis of women's oppression lies. I acknowledge that women, as well as men, objectify women, and examining women's perceptions of women are also valuable and worthwhile, yet they were not the focus of this study. Participants were delimited to male, heterosexual, masters-level counseling students in CACREP-accredited programs, and currently seeing clients, to provide a thick and rich understanding of their perceptions as providers of counseling services to women. Masters-level students were chosen, as opposed to doctoral students, because they represent the source of future clinicians, supervisors, or educators; and are greater in numbers.

### **Summary**

In this study, information was collected to better understand male counseling students' perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty and how those perceptions impact their interactions. Male graduate counseling students were interviewed to discover their current perceptions of women, specifically, their female clients, peers, and faculty. Gender is a significant factor in the counseling relationship, and in our culture, gender and gender stereotypes play a large role in our lives and our interactions. Understanding male, counseling students' perceptions of females will help to inform the current state of gender awareness and sensitivity in counseling presently.



It is important to note the males in my doctoral cohort discussed earlier in this chapter were contacted, and their consent to include this information and my interpretation of it was approved prior to conducting the study.

### **Definition of Terms**

Feminist/Feminism – Feminism, at its core, is the belief that equality should exist between women and men, and among women (Worell & Remer, 2003).

Objectification Theory – “This theoretical framework places female bodies in a sociocultural context with the aim of illuminating the lived experiences and mental health risks of girls and women who encounter sexual objectification” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 174).

Sexism - Sexual objectification is sexism, which has been defined as “hostility toward women” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 491).

Sexual Objectification - Another term often used in discussions about sexual objectification “is the experience of being treated *as a body* (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 174).

Therapist-Client Sex – Therapist sexual involvement with a client.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

In this chapter, the professional literature pertaining to the historical and current objectification of women, gender issues, including male privilege, status characteristic theory, and gender concerns in general are explicated. Counselor education and training as it relates to gender is presented, particularly within a social justice and advocacy context. Additionally, the ethical and accreditation standards are discussed related to gender, as is the current status of counselor education and training inclusion of gender topics.

#### **Women's History and Feminism**

A review of relevant women's history and feminism provided the rationale and context for an examination of gender concerns and counseling. The oppression of women has a lengthy and pervasive history, dating back to ancient times (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). This literature review specifically examined the 21<sup>st</sup> century perceptions and beliefs about women and the history and context reviewed was set in nineteenth through twenty-first centuries of the United States.

#### **Feminism**

The word feminist can be traced back to "a book review in the *Athenaeum* of April 27, 1895, describing a woman who 'has in her the capacity of fighting her way back to independence'" (Faludi, 1991, p. xxiii). At the heart of the fight, women were battling for equality and freedom. For centuries, women were viewed as inferior to men, less

intelligent than men, and the rightful property of men. Women were defined by their subordinate role, presumed incompetence and restricted freedoms. At its core, feminism is the belief that equality should exist between women and men and among women (Worell & Remer, 2003).

### **The First Wave**

Women in the United States in the 1830s took action toward the abolition of slavery, and during this time awareness and recognition of their personal subjugation became a focal point. In response to this awareness many spoke out and organized against their own injustices (Kravetz & Marecek, 2001). Further oppression and discrimination toward women was evidenced as many of these women were scorned for speaking up and speaking out in public for women's rights and thus were barred from any further involvement in the antislavery work. It was as if these women were being told, working for the injustices of slavery were noble and righteous, yet working for equality of all of humankind (women) was unacceptable.

As a result of being excluded from participation in the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention several women initiated the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention in 1848, the first women's rights convention (Kravetz & Marecek, 2001). During the Seneca Falls convention, the first women's movement in the United States, women's rights were discussed and the Declaration of Sentiments was proposed. This Declaration was fashioned after the Declaration of Independence and was written to specifically address the rights of women (National Women's History Project: NWHP, 2002). The event is typically recognized as evidence of the first women's movement in the United States and was the beginning of a lengthy and arduous road for women to secure the same

basic rights and freedoms as men in society. Incredibly courageous, competent women, known as Suffragists, worked determinedly to gain women's right to vote. Women organized, lectured, marched, protested, and demonstrated in order to gain the right to vote.

In 1920, just 90 years ago, the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified, after years of toil and strife. Alas, any citizen could not be denied the right to vote because of gender. A recent film, *Iron Jawed Angels* (2004), illustrated the amazing and heroic efforts of the women who played a role in this historic achievement. In this film, Alice Paul, and others', undertook a haunting and desperate hunger strike. As a woman, I was profoundly impacted by this dramatization, and gained a deeper appreciation for the women who had the moral fiber to endure and persevere in the face of resistance. Prior to seeing this film, I did not have an awareness of the individual sacrifices and suffering women endured during this time.

### **The Second Wave**

Societal, familial and economic transformations occurred as a result of World War II (WW II). Social changes in the wartime economy required women to enter the labor market in record numbers. For the first time in recorded history, many women earned a living wage and could financially support themselves and their families. As a result, many women experienced a new sense of independence and identity. After WW II, however, many women were displaced from jobs, society and economics compelled them to return to their "place" at home. In order to achieve happiness and productivity, women experienced pressure from many sources to pursue marriage, dependence and homemaking (Faludi, 1991) rather than interpersonal and economic independence. For

many women it was impossible for them to recoil and return to an earlier time thus many women seized the opportunity to once again resist the forces being put upon them and pushed for change.

The 1960s has been recognized as the era that launched the second wave of the women's movement (Kravetz & Marecek, 2001; NWHP, 2002) which focused on economic, sexual and reproductive liberties. For example, in 1963, Betty Friedan published a landmark book, *The Feminine Mystique*, which challenged the assertions espoused about women and their ascribed function in society. In Friedan's (1963) controversial book, she shined a light on the oppressive nature of women's destiny as homemakers and mothers (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; NWHP, 2002). Instead of relegating women to the position of devalued housewife, Friedan advocated for women to seek education and other activities by choice. Women experienced a stark difference between what was publicized and what was authentic. A prime example of the rhetoric occurring during this time was noted by Coontz (2005); in an article, she defended Friedan's views and identified the paradox of women hoping for something different for their daughters.

A 1962 Gallup poll, for instance, reported that women were the happiest people on earth because, as one housewife reported 'a woman needs a master-slave relationship whether it's husband and wife or boss-secretary.' Buried in the article was the astonishing fact that almost 90 percent of these self-reported happy housewives hoped their daughters would not follow in their footprints. (para. 5)

In 1966, Friedan and others formed the National Organization for Women (NOW), which served and continues to serve as a women's organization that advocates for gender equity between women and men. The leadership of NOW also focuses on redefining women's roles within the home and society, reproductive rights, and economic parity. Women's

reproductive rights (Kravetz & Marecek, 2001), including access to contraception and abortions was vital as for the first time women sought control over their reproductive health, their bodies and the timing of conception. Concurrent with these efforts, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was passed to ensure equal pay for women and for the first time employers had to pay equal wages for the same job regardless of sex, which has still not been achieved today. This, of course, did not take into consideration that men did not perform *typical* women's work, and therefore labor which was customarily women's (e.g., keeping a home and childcare) continued to be paid below market value. Despite enactment of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, almost fifty years later, women of all races in the U.S. earn 77% of what white men earn (Institute for Women's Policy Research Compilation of Current Population Survey Labor Force Statistics, 2009). As women's concerns remained in the forefront of society, the federal government sought to redress inequities in women's education at all levels with the passage of Title IX in 1972. This Act was recently renamed the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act and prohibited sex discrimination in federally assisted education programs or activities. Feminists from the second wave (1960-1980) were more intentional about broadening their scope to include women from all cultures and backgrounds, including sexuality (Kravetz & Marecek, 2001) and were vital to improvement in women's rights and status.

### **The Backlash**

As women continued to progress towards equality, fear of feminism and concerns related to the loss of or change in power dynamics between men and women undulated across the nation; and "By the mid-'80s, as resistance to women's rights acquired political and social acceptability, it passed into the popular culture" (Faludi, 1991, p. xix).

During this period, expansion of women's rights degenerated or at least stalled (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). Faludi (1991) noted several impediments to progress including the failure to pass the Equal Rights Amendment in 1982 and gross reduction in federal funding for programs focused on women such as support for battered women's shelters. As opposition to the movement grew some in the media portrayed feminists as haters of men who sought to destroy the nuclear family (Kravetz & Marecek, 2001). The conservative political atmosphere in the 1980s did little to support the rights and welfare of women and children, thus assistance programs were sharply diminished (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; Kravetz & Marecek, 2001) and in many instances eradicated. Susan Faludi (1991) wrote a landmark book, *Backlash*, in which she highlighted the social, political and cultural barriers to progress for women in the 1980s. Faludi (1991) provided an unapologetic view of the effects of power on the women's movement efforts during that period of time and defined the feminist agenda as asking:

...that women not be forced to 'choose' between public justice and private happiness. It asks that women be free to define themselves-instead of having their identity defined for them, time and again, by their culture and their men. (p. xxiii)

Yet, it became clear via the backlash, that this agenda posed a threat to the culture of the day and to male female relationships.

### **The Third Wave**

The third wave of the women's movement (Kravetz & Marecek, 2001) extended from the 1990s to the present day (Zerbe Enns & Sinacore, 2001) and many feminists have arrived at a more open and individualistic view of feminism. For example:

Third-wave feminists have sought to fight a feminist backlash in the larger culture by putting forth a feminism that is flexible, that broadens the public's view of what it means to be feminist, and that allows them to express their individuality

and uniqueness. (Zerbe Enns & Sinacore, 2001, X. Generation-X Third-Wave Feminism, para. 2)

Advocates for women and women's rights have continued to meet challenges, both political and societal. Atkinson and Hackett (2004) listed the following concerns as still present for women today: social inequality, economic disadvantage, maternity and child care support, occupational segregation and comparable worth, wage discrimination, economic consequences of unequal treatment, gender-role stereotyping, and victimization.

It is important to recognize the historical perspective of women and feminism, and also to review cultural bias and objectification of women. This foundation establishes the intensity and depth of how women have been viewed and treated in our culture as well as the possibility of perpetuating these inequities if there is a disregard of the past.

### **Objectification of Women and Gender Bias**

An important part of our history is to understand that our culture is deeply rooted in patriarchy and androcentrism. These features describe our sociopolitical system and elements that are intertwined socially and politically. Patriarchy refers to the conviction that men are more valuable than women and androcentrism is the concept that because men are more valuable, women are compared or judged based on masculine qualities and standards which they are unlikely to attain (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; Basow, 2001; Brown Travis & Meginnis-Payne, 2001; Kimmel & Crawford, 2001). As male privilege and power have historically been the cultural norm they have significantly contributed to gender biases and the objectification of women (Worell & Johnson, 2001). Seem and Johnson (1998) explained gender bias as the construct of bias toward gender based on characteristics other than biological sex. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that



unearned privilege bestowed upon men and male privilege has a counter and deleterious effect on women (McIntosh, 1992).

Objectification is “an instrument of subjugation whereby the needs, interests, and experiences of those with less power are subordinated to those of the powerful, and this facilitates using others as means to an end” (Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee & Galinsky, 2008, p. 111). When women are objectified, they are viewed as a possession or an object and are often sexualized (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007). Sexual objectification “is the experience of being treated *as a body* (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 174). Gender bias and sexual objectification underlie many forms of oppression of women (e.g., lower status and economic standing). In the following sections many of those inequities are explored more closely.

### **Sexism**

Another term often used in discussions about sexual objectification is sexism, which has been defined as “hostility toward women” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 491). Glick and Fiske (1996) recognized that sexism is an unusual form of prejudice because men are in power, yet depend on women for a variety of reasons. As a result of this complexity, Glick and Fiske (1996) identified two types of sexism: hostile and benevolent sexism, both are components of the more encompassing form of ambivalent sexism. Hostile sexism, as one might expect, refers to overt, negative or antagonistic feelings toward women (i.e., women should submit); on the other hand, benevolent sexism is more covert and on the surface, seems to be positive (i.e., women should be cherished). Yet, benevolent sexism has a negative impact on women’s credibility (Glick

& Fiske, 1996), women are “cherished” because they are viewed as weaker and in need of protection. Although it seems positive on the surface, the second category (i.e., benevolent sexism) still restricts women and supports male domination. Glick and Fiske (1996) identified three components of male ambivalence toward women, they are: paternalism, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality. Paternalism, similar to a father dealing with a child, carries both domination and protection; gender differentiation utilizes gender to distinguish and categorize individuals based on social explanation; and heterosexuality is the romantic relationship between men and women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). They identified these constructs as beliefs that framed their sexism theory. Recently, ambivalent sexism was summarized this way, “ambivalent sexist attitudes are rooted in heterosexual close relationships in the context of greater societal gender power relations, and represent men and women’s attitudes toward gender-relations within three areas: gender hierarchy and power, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality” (Lee, Fiske, & Glick, 2010, p. 396).

Men may experience objectification and sexism, but it is “a bigger problem for women” (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007, p. 92) because as Becker (2010) noted, negative stereotypes about women contribute to sexism and support the degradation of women. The historical and cultural events that have shaped gender roles have often been damaging toward women, thus the implications of gender oppression are experienced uniquely between men and women. It is also important to note, that both men and women have been shown to hold ambivalent sexist attitudes toward women, however, men are more sexist than women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Additionally, women’s sexist attitudes toward women are often viewed as a way of adjusting to the dominant group

(men) and surviving in their circumscribed subordinate role (Lee, Fiske, & Glick, 2010).

In the section that follows, significant ways in which women are objectified or sexualized are examined.

### **Gender and Appearance Related to Sexualization**

Status characteristics theory (SCT), developed by Berger, Fiske, Norman, and Zelditch (1977) is a concept that explains how people organize and associate individuals around characteristics such as race, gender, and appearance. The developers of this theory found that based on these characteristics, individuals are judged on such things as degree of competency, and people who possess undesirable characteristics, such as women, are paired with lower expectations of competence. Umberson and Hughes (1987) conducted a study to test SCT specifically related to attractiveness or looks. The study was performed using data from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, collected in 1978 with a sample size of 3,692. Findings supported the supposition that physical attractiveness positively affected a person's mental health and well-being. The authors found support for the notion that characteristics like attractiveness could and did serve as a visible means of discrimination, similar to race and gender (Umberson & Hughes, 1987). Attractive people were attributed with and perceived to hold positive characteristics simply based on their attractive appearance. Women who were considered unattractive were in a double bind because they were likely to have characteristics that were associated with less competence and these women were unlikely to be awarded unearned positive characteristics based on their appearance. Studies have shown that women dressed in a more seductive or sexy fashion were at an advantage in service roles (i.e., waitresses and secretaries) (Glick, Larsen, Johnson, &

Branstiter, 2005) and gained more social and economic benefits (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). On the other hand, women dressed seductively or in a sexualized manner were judged as less capable and less smart (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007). Women's looks or appearance were found to influence the degree of perceived capability, and if viewed as less credible, there is greater risk of objectification (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007).

Women in academia are afflicted with a triple bind; in addition to gender, they are scrutinized and judged based on age and appearance or looks (lookism), which are conditions their male colleagues are not subjected to (Granleese & Sayer, 2006). Female academics were viewed as less attractive than females in business, suggesting that lack of attractiveness was actually an expectation in the academy. These expectations may have placed attractive female academics at a disadvantage because it is difficult for colleagues and students to get beyond their appearance (Granleese & Sayer, 2006). These factors (i.e., ageism and lookism) are in addition to the gender-based expectations of women in academia, specifically the role of motherhood. Research has demonstrated that women who marry and have children are less likely than men to achieve tenure and full professorship (Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008), which carries negative economic consequences for women.

### **Sexualization**

Sexualization of women is a pervasive gender concern. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) acknowledged the impact of images, such as in visual media that contribute to the sexual objectification of women. One of the consequences of the constant barrage of and focus on women's appearance is the propensity for women to be viewed as objects to be evaluated, both by others and themselves (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Rudman and

Borgida (1995) concluded that sexist advertising “(1) encourages men to mentally cast women into subjugative, sexualized roles and (2) facilitates access to norms advocating use of a sexist subtype” (p. 514). Willer (2008) revealed modern fashion magazines are prime culprits in sexualizing and subjugating women and teens. Fashion and advertising support and propel images of females as sex objects, submissive to men, and marginalized in society. Willer (2008) pointed out that fashion magazines and advertising have a powerful and enduring influence on all of us.

Differing perceptions of sexual intent is another gender-based concern. Koukounas and Letch (2001) demonstrated the difference in perceptions based on their study which consisted of 183 men and 186 women. These researchers investigated the perceptions of women’s sexual intent in female-male interactions and found, as others have (i.e., Abbey, 1982; Snell & Papini, 1989) that men perceived more sexual intent in cross gendered interactions than did women, and men tended to process verbal and nonverbal cues through a sexual lens. These factors are likely to have a strong influence on communication and relationships between women and men and may be a cause of misunderstandings and mistaken beliefs between genders. Often, this problem and the responsibility of misperceptions of sexual intent have been placed on the shoulders of women. In an attempt to increase sensitivity, Koukounas and Letch (2001) pointed out “...rather than women’s restricting their behavior and dress to reduce men’s perceptions of sexual intent, it is appropriate for a man and a woman to engage in direct, open communication to reduce misinterpretation of their social interaction” (p. 452). In order to provide culturally competent counseling and to promote a socially equitable society, it is important for counselors, and in particular male counselors, to understand and respond

to sexist attitudes and the sexual objectification of and violence toward women. The next section focuses on literature pertaining to sexual violation of women.

### **Victimization/Survivors of Sexual Violence**

Women are continually exposed to the threat of sexual assault and rape (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). Women are 10 times more likely to be raped than men; therefore, rape is often considered a gender-based assault (Bachar & Koss, 2001). For years, women suffered not only the physical and emotional trauma of the rape or assault, but additionally, society sought to blame them for these violent and heinous acts (e.g., rape myth). For centuries, it was as if women everywhere were sent the metaphorical and literal message: “If you reveal you were sexually violated, be prepared to be scrutinized and challenged, and have your character and dignity thrashed in public.” This puts women, and female clients, peers, and faculty, in a terrible dilemma in which they may be expected to suffer in silence and are discouraged from seeking justice, or risk re-victimization and potential violation a second time by the very system that is in place to protect their rights.

Not surprisingly, but nevertheless insulting, a great deal of research has been done on *victim* profiling, or trying to ascertain what makes one woman more susceptible to rape over another. This is additional evidence of the degradation of the female victim, as she, not the perpetrator of the violent act, became the focus of research. Bachar and Koss (2001) highlighted the misguided nature of this research when they stated “Most victims were different from women who had not been victimized primarily because they had encountered a sexually aggressive man” (II. Vulnerability and Risk, para. 4).

Recently, Kushmider, Beebe, and Black (in press), investigated rape myth acceptance among counselors in training. In this study, the authors pointed out how common rape myths (i.e., women want to be raped, or the way women dress or the situations they put themselves in are reasons women are raped) were perpetuated by sex role stereotypes and biases. Unfortunately, even women who are victims of rape may adopt a sense of self blame, unfairly accepting the culpability for the perpetrator. In their qualitative study, Kushmider, et al. (in press) found indications that counselors-in-training, although unintended, showed signs of supporting rape myth beliefs.

Additionally, many people have misunderstood that power and oppression are often the motive for sexual assault, not sex or sexuality (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). Once a person understands the nature of the desecration of sexual assault and again asks the question “why?”, she or he may hear the echoes of Chesler (1972) “Women are raped because we cannot defend ourselves ‘like men’” (p. 290).

Women have endured many forms of sexual assault-rape, incest, sexual harassment, but the victimization does not end there. Sexism also perpetuates emotional and physical abuse, including domestic violence (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). As mentioned previously, the second wave of the women’s movement focused on increasing public awareness of issues related to women and abuse and advocated for rape and domestic violence centers, shelters, and support services for women and children affected by all forms of abuse (Kravetz & Marecek, 2001).

In addition to the sexual and relational objectification, women experience economic disparities and oppression. In the section that follows the elements and consequences of these complexities are highlighted.

## **Economic Disparities**

Several obstacles have been identified as contributors to the gender-based gap in pay. Issues related to motherhood (e.g., time away from work), gender discrimination, and sexual harassment are a few commonly attributed factors (Murrell & James, 2001). Another significant factor which contributes to the pay gap is that jobs and careers typically occupied by women are consistently paid less (Karlin, England, & Richardson, 2002), supporting the notion that women and women's work is less valuable.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963, which was passed to ensure equal pay for women, continues to fall short. The wage gap continues to be an obvious incongruence in pay equity; however, as mentioned previously, this does not account for the entire gap. The financial disparity between men and women is multifaceted and thorny, Atkinson and Hackett (2004) explained:

Ongoing discrimination, even though illegal, continues; but the reasons for the wage gap are complex and extend beyond overt discrimination and simplistic and sexist views of women in the workforce, to include inadequate maternity benefits and child care, occupational segregation by sex, and devaluation of women's work as well as outright pay inequities. (p. 100)

Earning less because of gender biases and stereotypes, women are often employed in lower paying jobs and not given equal opportunity at higher paid ones, traditionally male jobs or industries. Thus, female head of household families are at greater risk of poverty and the negative consequences of being poor – (i.e., more crime, health risks, inadequate services, poor housing, and homelessness) (Fraser Wyche, 2001). Divorced women with children often find themselves at risk of financial hardships due to gender inequities (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; Fraser Wyche, 2001). These circumstances may



contribute to women staying in an oppressive relationship or living in poverty (Fraser Wyche, 2001).

When educated, professional women and men are compared, men continue to come out on top economically. A study conducted by Sabharwal and Corley (2009) using data from the 2003 Survey of Doctorate Recipients, found that men are more likely to be tenured and paid high salaries. In addition to their own study, Sabharwal and Corley (2009) cited several other sources that supported this conclusion across disciplines and over time. Many factors were examined in these studies to explain these differences, including time away from work for women (e.g., having children, family/work balance) and decreased likelihood of holding positions at research universities. Subtle biases, as opposed to outright discrimination, and women not wanting or seeking jobs of more rigor or at more rigorous universities (i.e., likely due to family/work balance and consequences of gender-bias) were highlighted as possible conclusions to continued gender-gap issues in academia (Wilson, 2004).

### **Objectification Theory**

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) provided a framework, objectification theory, to understand the sexual objectification of women. Objectification theory is relevant to counseling and counselor training because sexual objectification is recognized as one type of gender oppression that contributes to a range of other forms of discrimination toward women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Women's mental health and treatment have been affected by objectification and sexism (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The attention and scrutiny placed on women's bodies, women's clothing, and women's appearance has far

reaching and deep seated implications for women's mental health, namely unipolar depression, sexual dysfunction, violence and abuse, and eating disorders (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Fredrickson and Robert's (1997) construction of objectification theory cannot be underestimated as a source for understanding the experiences of many women. As concluded in their original article, "Objectification theory represents our attempt to push further a sociocultural analysis of the female body within the psychology of women and gender" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 196). This framework provides the context for my study. Of particular concern to me are male counselor's perceptions of the females they encounter in their professional work and whether their perceptions perpetuate the objectification of women. One way to examine male counselors' perceptions is to describe the current state of counselor training related to gender concerns that are evident in the accreditation and ethical standards of our field. The next section presents a review of the literature particular to gender issues in counselor training.

### **Gender-Related Education and Training of Counselors**

The previous sections of this chapter provided the context for the historical objectification and oppression of women, in the present section I focus on a combination of feminist and social justice perspectives as the foundation for the current study. By understanding more about male counselor's perceptions, I believe, the counseling profession can intentionally promote equity for women and avoid unintentional perpetuation of oppression. An appropriate and helpful framework for counselors surrounding gender is social justice or social advocacy. The use of these combined frameworks recognizes that many of women's issues brought to counseling are likely to

be gender-based and relationship-oriented (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; McAuliffe et al., 2008) and because women are higher consumers of counseling services (Choate, 2009; McAuliffe et al., 2008). Degradation of women has been shown to negatively impact women's physical and mental health, and this is a concern for social justice and advocacy based counselors.

We still have work to do. In the summer 2005 edition of *Journal of Counseling & Development*, Kees et al. wrote about envisioning a future that is free of oppression, honorable, and fair to all:

Imagine a future in which all women and men acknowledge the privileges that are awarded to them on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ability and strive to ameliorate those privileges by continuing to increase their understanding and to work diligently for the equal rights and just treatment of all. (p. 381)

This sentiment is relevant to the education and training programs for counselors. The topic of gender is not only key to counselor education and training; it is an ethical obligation to highlight gender in the education and training of counselors (Daniluk, Stein, & Bockus, 1995; Hoffman, 1996; Stevens-Smith, 1995).

Numerous articles (Daniluk, Stein, & Bockus, 1995; Hoffman, 1996; Seem & Johnson, 1998; Stevens-Smith, 1995) were written in the 1990s about the merit of gender issues and counseling. Twenty years later, however, the issue of gender remains a neglected topic in the literature. Studies that examined men's perceptions or beliefs about women in counseling literature are either nonexistent or two decades old. Even in the late 1990s, Seem and Johnson (1998) pointed out that few studies on gender bias were conducted in the 10 years prior to writing the article, and there appeared to be a decline of interest in the topic. As recent as 2005, women's inequality continued to be an issue

unaddressed in counselor education and training (Kees et al., 2005). All people are affected by situations and experiences when they are subjected to unwarranted and bigoted implications. Drawing on the work of Freire (1970), Black and Stone (2005) commented on the impact of social privilege on the oppressor and the oppressed (i.e., in the current context male counselors and their female clients, peers, and faculty). These authors expounded on the implications of social privilege and the importance of such awareness in the counseling relationship. Gender has also been described as a factor or characteristic which applies to every single person and is a critical component of one's identity and the lens which the world is viewed (Stevens-Smith, 1995), thus it is a salient focus for counselor training.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) standards historically have not dictated how programs attend to or accomplish gender education. This leaves counselor educators in the position of fulfilling this obligation in an accountable and conscientious manner, with little guidance. The CACREP 2009 Standards, the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) Code of Ethics, and the ACA *Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2005) all provided guidelines to inform and guide practitioners' behavior in regard to gender, including understanding gender, and its impact and effects. Yet, the question remains: Are counselors being trained to provide ethical services related to gender and in particular women's concerns? For our profession to claim this, it seems logical and ethical for programs to demonstrate how they provide adequate training and education to fulfill this principled responsibility.

Hoffman (1996) noted that gender concerns were not just related to women, but were important to both females and males. A systemic approach and attention to both

sexes is critical to encompass the breadth and depth of counselor gender awareness and education (Daniluk et al., 1995; Hoffman, 1996; Kees et al., 2005). Hoffman (1996) also acknowledged that focusing on women only, when it comes to gender issues, is short-sighted, restrictive, and contrary to the goal of gender awareness and education.

Therefore, attention to both women and men seems not only appropriate but an approach that would directly contribute to the purpose and facilitation of gender awareness and education. However, although I recognize the relevance of Hoffman's statement, the focus of this study was on male counselor's perceptions of females because of the power and authority commonly awarded to males in our culture and the greatest source for potential change.

### **Men's Counseling Issues**

In the professional counseling literature, there are few articles that specifically concentrated on the training of male counselors or male clients' issues. Liu (2005) addressed men's issues and masculinity while using a multicultural competency approach. An important and critical element of gender, men and masculinity, must also be studied to gain full awareness and understanding of gender. Liu (2005) stated that gender, like race, is a critical characteristic that is shaped and constructed through society, culture, and the past. When gender education and training is considered, it is critical to include the roles and expectations of males as well as females. Counselors need to consider and understand how patriarchy influences one's perceptions and interactions, as evidenced by the following statement: "When considering these issues, systems and traditions that seem benignly impersonal can be recognized as limiting and costly for both women and men and as especially dangerous for women" (Brown Travis

& Meginnis-Payne, 2001, IV. Patriarchal Connections, para. 1). By omitting information regarding men, only part of the story is being told, which ultimately limits advancement of the whole. As stated by Liu (2005), “Finding healthy ways of relating and undoing networks of power and oppression not only benefit women but men as well” (p. 690), which contributes to the success of all our daughters and sons.

Although including men’s issues are important, a focus on women and women’s issues remains critical. Attention to women’s issues in counseling is justifiable considering the history of women’s oppression, the fact that women and men come to counseling for different reasons (Stevens-Smith, 1995), and due to the number of women seeking counseling being larger than men (Choate, 2009; Kees et al., 2005).

### **Counselor Self-Awareness**

As noted earlier, overlooking or omitting gender awareness in counselor education and training could be judged to be a violation of the ethical codes of the profession (Daniluk et al., 1995; Hoffman, 1996; Stevens-Smith, 1995). An integral progression toward gender awareness and understanding is knowing oneself. By participating in a process of self exploration and expression, counselors in training can expose and confront their assumptions and biases in relation to gender, specifically women. Self-examination and awareness are critical and ethical considerations in terms of understanding one’s own biases and the potential impact of these biases on clients (Broverman et al., 1970; Daniluk et al., 1995; Kees et al., 2005; Stevens-Smith, 1995).

Gender is an important topic for self exploration and expression. Awareness and knowledge of gender facilitates healthy and productive counselor – client relationships. Personal reflection and awareness may form the building blocks of intentional and mutual

gender respect for clients, peers, and faculty. Gender interactions are greater than personal exchanges; consequently, Stevens-Smith (1995) identified four levels of gender issues – personal, clinical, social, and political. In a clinical context, it is important to recognize and examine gender as an influential factor, one that is subject to the influences of social and political forces, and to create a space where the demands of gender roles and messages can be explored for harm and usefulness.

Gender is an innate part of an individual's personhood; therefore, it is particularly important for counselors to intentionally and introspectively explore their own gender schema. Bringing one's beliefs to the forefront is important to avoid unintentionally acting on gender biases and stereotypes (Stevens-Smith, 1995; Trepal, Wester, & Shuler, 2008) and perpetuating gender biases (Broverman et al., 1970). In an often-cited, landmark study, Broverman et al. (1970) found, as they presumed, that clinicians held sex-role stereotypes and favorable behaviors or characteristics were associated with men. This finding is consistent with the construct of privilege, in this case male privilege, which describes a lack of awareness of the conferred advantage or status.

An unexamined belief in one's status or superiority can lead to a distorted view of self and others (Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000). For example, in 1978, Sherman, Koufacos, and Kenworthy examined potential gender bias in counseling through the use of two scales, the Therapists' Information About Women Scale (TIWS) and the Therapists' Attitude Toward Women Scale (TAWS). In a sample of 184 therapists, they found that therapists, particularly males, were ill-equipped to adequately assist female clients. Specifically, they found that male therapists especially held sex biases and

lacked knowledge about female physical and psychological phenomena (Sherman et al., 1978).

Seem and Johnson (1998) conducted a study to assess counselor bias toward gender based on gender roles. These authors used case studies in which one traditional female and one traditional male role descriptions were created. Then, female and male versions of each description were produced. The participants answered questions based on the case studies to elicit additional information they would want to get from the client and treatment goals. The findings from this study supported previous findings (e.g., Sherman et al., 1978) that counselor trainees do have a number of gender biases, particularly when it comes to traditional gender roles, and the authors affirmed the need and importance of training to reduce gender role bias for counselor trainees. Specific gender deviations which evoked biased reactions from the participants were surrounding motherhood for female clients and career and financial contributor status for male clients. These studies showed there is gender bias in counselors, and still, the profession continues to struggle with how to address gender in education and training (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). Until adequate attention is paid to issues related to gender, counselors may be actively supporting inequity of women.

Despite the expectations of ethical codes and accreditation standards, gender bias continues among counselors. In 2006, Seem and Clark replicated the work of the Bovermans and their colleagues, to assess social desirability and to investigate gender role stereotypes. They noted that there were many changes in regards to gender role stereotyping over the years, and yet, their research showed that many of the same gender



biases still exist today; “Counselors-in-training were found to hold two standards for mental health –one for women and another for men” (p. 247).

More recently, in 2008, Trepal et al. conducted a study to investigate counselors’-in-training (CIT’s) perceptions of gender, and they too found that women and men were viewed in traditional ways, meaning there are certain stereotypical ways that women and men are viewed; this seemed to impact perceptions and value based attributions. Additionally, they found that the CITs were not always aware of their gender biases, which further supported the need for intentional and focused self assessment relating to gender assumptions and beliefs. The results of the study led the authors to wonder what would happen if a client (or anyone) did not conform to traditional roles; what biases or assumptions would be placed upon that person? It is critical for counselor educators and supervisors to acknowledge gender as a pivotal characteristic on which clients, students, and faculty are assessed.

### **Therapist-Client Sex**

A matter that must be included in this area of concern for women is therapist-client sex (TCS), which has been identified as “a significant phenomenon” (Pope, 2001). Women are at greater risk of becoming a victim of TCS (Ben-Ari & Somer, 2004) and “...offending therapists are overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) male while exploited clients are overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) female” (Pope, 2001, III. Gender Differences, para. 1). This is another example of male power and domination of women. Counselors are often viewed as a person in authority, simply by virtue of position; clients often feel vulnerable and emotionally fragile when they come to counseling. Counseling is an intimate process, and feelings of closeness are common.

The relationship between counselor and client is a special relationship and requires counselors to have clear and consistent boundaries. The counselor is responsible for implementing and maintaining boundaries in the relationship (ACA, 2005; Pope, 2001). TCS has a profoundly negative impact on clients; women have reported various traumatic results of TCS, including loss of trust, guilt, devastation, as well as feelings of having been exploited, taken advantage of, and increased risk for suicide (Ben-Ari & Somer, 2004; Pope, 2001).

The special and unique relationship between the client and the counselor has been compared to that of a child and parent (Ben-Ari & Somer, 2004). When viewed in this context, one can begin to imagine the harm and damage that is done when a counselor disregards their legal and ethics codes and assaults their client in this way. The nature of the relationship in counseling calls for specialized training in the prevention of TCS (Ben-Ari & Somer, 2004; Thoreson, Shaughnessy, & Frazier, 1995). Informing students that it is against professional guidelines is simply not enough; “To help others who come to them with their problems, the mental health professions must first take care of their own problem of sexually exploitive therapists” (Pope, 2001, IV. Conclusion, para. 3).

### **Gender Coursework**

In 1995, Stevens-Smith shared her frustration and concern regarding the discrepancy between actual attention and focus on gender in counselor education and espoused theoretical importance of professionals and educators in the field. One way to support the goal of increased attention and awareness to gender concerns is via coursework. Dupuy, Ritchie, and Cook (1994) conducted a survey of 120 counseling education programs using a questionnaire they constructed and found less than half of

counselor education programs offered courses on women's or gender issues, and scarcely more than a handful of the courses were mandatory. The participants were asked questions regarding the inclusion of women's and gender issues in their counseling curricula. At that time, a possible explanation, among others, for the lack of attention given to gender may have been that most faculty were male and most students were female, and several factors related to those dimensions (Stevens-Smith, 1995).

Daniluk et al. (1995) clearly acknowledged the importance and responsibility to include gender training and education, partly justified on our professional code of ethics, and admitted there is no standardized way to carry out this goal. The authors also respectfully recognized the sensitivity and potential ethical consideration of exposing what may be a "disturbing and unsettling" topic for some students (p. 300). It is imperative to appreciate that trust and safety are essential ingredients in gender courses (Daniluk et al., 1995; Good & Heppner, 1995).

An obvious approach to infusing gender in counseling education and training is via coursework. A study conducted by Brooks and Kahn (1990) evaluated a new course in gender and cultural issues. The 57 participants completed the TAWS, along with two other measurements. The course was a required class for all master's degree students and fulfilled the call from the accrediting and professional bodies at the time. To prepare for an increased number of counselor training programs offering courses like this one, the authors looked at the effectiveness of this course on counselor gender and cultural awareness. The authors found the course was effective in positively expanding participant's attitudes toward women's issues. However, there were implications to

suggest that being in a counseling program itself may impact student's supportive attitudes toward women.

Another study that supported the inclusion and effectiveness of gender coursework was conducted by Good and Heppner (1995). The authors examined 10 student's perceptions, both qualitatively and quantitatively, of a gender issues course, described as "...designed to increase students' knowledge, awareness, and skills related to working with the gender-related concerns of their clients" (p. 310). The authors found that students significantly advanced their gender awareness during the course, which is precisely what so much of the literature suggests. Although these studies indicate the need for and importance of gender based coursework, it is important to note that most of these works are greater than 15 years old, and to date, there has been little to no focus on gender issues in counselor training and supervision leading one to ask Why?

### **Above and Beyond Coursework**

Good, Gilbert, and Scher (1990) put forth a model, Gender Aware Therapy (GAT) that integrated feminist theory and gender principles for both women and men. GAT acknowledged the need for counselors to have the knowledge, attitude, and skills to sufficiently work with clients within a gender biased society. Good et al. (1990) further proposed counselors should assist clients to recognize and question society's influence on gender and the affects of those pressures on their lives. Hoffman (1996) applied the five tenets of Gender Aware Therapy (GAT) to counselor education, as summarized here: (a) gender is an essential part of counselor education; (b) an acknowledgement that gender is a construct of society; (c) female and male faculty can be the case for change; (d) a spirit

of collaboration with other sources and entities; (e) support individual choices and theoretical positions.

A systemic blend of gender awareness and education is preferred over a single and sometimes elective course in gender studies. Comstock et al., (2003) acknowledged the call and need for gender inclusion in counselor education and training programs and put forth a model, The Relational Model of Gender Awareness Development, using the Relational-Cultural Model to facilitate this purpose. The Relational Cultural Model or the Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) developed based on the work of Jean Baker Miller, and others, is a relational development framework (Jean Baker Miller Training Institute, 2010). The Relational Model of Gender Awareness Development is a helpful framework to "...normalize the process..." (Comstock et al., 2003, p. 68) of examining gender issues in counselor training. The framework consists of five stages of gender sensitivity development for women and men. After 10 years of facilitating gender awareness and education in graduate counselor education, the authors developed this framework. Along with the model, authors, Comstock et al. (2003), offered suggestions pertaining to teaching gender "scholarship", ways to build trust, and sustain healthy, respectful discussions and interactions. This framework may be applied to coursework, theory, and practice.

There are numerous and unlimited ways to introduce and facilitate increased gender understanding and awareness. Educators and professionals are limited only by their own creativity to offer ways and methods to achieve this goal. Myers, Borders, Kress, and Shoffner (2005) offered an annual event in one counselor education program that corresponds with Women's History Month, which provides a powerful and informal

learning opportunity for students regarding gender, particularly women's issues. Accordingly, it does not seem to be too lofty a goal to expect counselor education programs to infuse gender in a manner to prepare gender competent professionals.

### **Summary**

Issues pertaining to women and gender have a considerable impact on counseling and counselor education and training. This literature review considered the historical oppression of women, the impact of gender-bias and objectification of women, and gender-related education and training of counselors. Understanding male counseling student's perceptions of females may offer increased awareness of methods to support gender awareness in the counseling profession.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, I hoped to gain a better understanding of male counseling students', in graduate counseling programs, perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. As illustrated in the literature review, in the U.S. culture, there is a demonstrated and historical objectification of women that has served a patriarchal culture. As counselors and social justice advocates, all counselors, and in particular male counselors who have gender based privileges, have a duty to not perpetuate this objectification or degradation of women.

A qualitative research design was selected for this study. Specifically, a case study method was utilized to guide the research approach. Case study design was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Particularly, a case study approach was suited for this research because the intention was to discover perceptions, to better understand them, and explore the potential effects of these perceptions. Case study methodology requires the nature of the inquiry to be contained within a bounded system (Merriam, 1998), which in this study, was male graduate counseling students. Additionally, Stake (1995) described a case study design as intrinsic (i.e., the researcher has an intrinsic interest in the case under study) or instrumental (i.e., the researcher is utilizing the case to understand a phenomenon). Thus, this case is deemed instrumental because the interest was in gathering and understanding the participants' perceptions and the potential to apply their

representations to other male counselors. The philosophical perspectives that framed this method of research were constructivism and feminism.

### **Philosophical Perspective**

Constructivism is built upon a postmodern perspective, which can be defined as “a philosophical position, postmodernism does not assume that there is a fixed truth; rather, individuals have constructs or perceptions of reality or truth” (Sharf, 2008, p. 17). Qualitative researchers often adopt a constructivist stance; “What they know of reality is only what they have come to believe, not what they have verified outside their experience” (Stake, 1995, p. 100). I adopted a constructivist stance as the foundation for this research, as it is consistent with my view of the world. Greater detail of my understanding and use of a constructivist stance will be presented later in this chapter.

### **Research Approach**

When reviewing qualitative research, often the research was framed in a particular way to be consistent with the personhood of the researcher. Crotty (1998) approached research using these four elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods. These fundamentals influence the structure of the research process. Ontology is another element that was often specified in qualitative research; however, ontology and epistemology merge together (Crotty, 1998; Najafi-Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009) and can be difficult to separate. Ontology is the study of being or what is reality (Crotty, 1998; Ponterotto, 2005). In this work, constructivism was viewed as the ontology, epistemology, and theoretical perspective or framework.



### **Conceptual Assumptions**

In order to understand my perspective and possible sources of bias, the reader must also understand my constructivist ontological, epistemological, and theoretical assumptions. The ontological difference between quantitative methods and qualitative methods, specifically constructivism, is the belief or acceptance that reality is an individual concept, rather than a global truth (Ponterotto, 2005). From a constructivist ontological view, reality is multifaceted, as opposed to solitary in nature (Najafi-Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005).

Crotty (1998) defined epistemology as "...what it means to know..." (p. 10). One's epistemological beliefs are vital and affect ideas and learning (Cakir, 2008), and constructivist epistemology holds that reality is socially constructed. Another tenet of constructivism is the belief that both the researcher and the participant are changed in some way by the research process (Najafi-Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005), meaning there is transformation by the mere process itself.

A theoretical perspective provides the foundation or basis for deciding which research methodology to choose (Crotty, 1998). The theoretical perspective or framework helps to shape and structure the finer points of research, such as the research problem, the research question, and the methods of research (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, an expanded description of constructivism follows.

### **Meaning of Constructivism**

Constructivism can be traced back to Kantian theory (Gordon, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005) and other noted theorists, such as Plato, Piaget, Vygotsky, Freire, and Foucault (Gordon, 2009). Constructivists believe that reality is understood through dialogue and

interaction between people, rather than something that can be observed or known by testing and experimentation (e.g., positivism). As such, there are multiple realities because reality is seen as a construction of and by individual interactions and perceptions. Ponterotto (2005) recounted constructivism this way, “Reality, according to the constructivist position, is subjective and influenced by the context of the situation, namely the individual’s experience and perceptions, the social environment, and the interaction between the individual and the researcher” (p. 130).

In essence, it is beneficial to investigate an idea or concept in order to better understand its meaning or social construction. Constructivism is not positivistic in nature (i.e., the belief that theory is verifiable), nor is it postpositivistic (i.e., the belief that theory can come to be known by falsification) (Ponterotto, 2005). In the true nature of constructivism, one can find a plethora of varied definitions of the concept of constructivism. Gordon (2009) pointed out that although there are collective characteristics, there are also distinctions that can create a fair amount of complexity to defining and understanding the philosophy. Gordon (2009) aptly implied if a meaning cannot be known, then how can its implications be discussed. Therefore, although concepts such as constructivism may be difficult to define, it is important to attempt to define this construct.

In contrast, Speed (1991) argued that constructivists have gone too far in asserting that “reality has *no* relevance at all to what we know” (p. 396). Speed (1991) contended that people, in particular, family therapists, have swung to constructivism as a reaction to the previously held or traditional realism ideology. However, Pouliot (2007) further defined constructivism as follows, “For constructivists, the phenomenal world cannot be

known outside of our socially constructed representations of it – language most prominently. One simply cannot know the world apart from *meaningful* realities; the world (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) are mutually constitutive processes” (p. 363).

I conclude this section on constructivism by relating it directly to my way of thinking and my experience. I know and understand the world from a constructivist point of view and have become increasingly more comfortable with this stance for a variety of reasons. There have been numerous occasions in my life when I acquired more knowledge, gathered conflicting information, or had an experience that changed or altered my reality. At first, it was startling, and sometimes troubling, to find out that what I once thought was real could be and was altered, not by some change in the issue or the phenomenon itself but in *my way* of believing or thinking about it. I felt tricked and even lied to at times. How could I have been taught, instructed, maybe even brainwashed to think or believe that someone’s or some people’s ideas were the “Truth”?

I was raised with a traditional, although fairly liberal, Christian foundation and belief system. During my undergraduate studies, I had the good fortune of reading two books, *When God Was a Woman*, and *The Chalice and the Blade: Our Story, Our Future*. These two texts profoundly shook my foundation, and caused me to wonder what was real, and how I knew what was real. Over a period of time, I realized the freedom that came from understanding there may be multiple realities and sometimes people tout their ideas as reality to benefit themselves and oppress others. This understanding moved me toward a constructivist way of seeing the world and even more so to a feminist view.

Resulting in my belief that knowledge and meaning are constructed via interactions with and between me and my environment.

### **Feminism as a Supporting Theory**

The second theoretical framework that supported my research was feminism. Feminist theory or a feminist framework has been defined, not unlike constructivism, in a multitude of ways (Olesen, 2000). However, like constructivism, there are some common underpinnings which most descriptions espouse. From a research perspective, a feminist stance takes into consideration, among other issues, the importance of reflexivity, the personal is political, the use of power and oppression, and gender (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994). Reflexivity, the process of openly reflecting on and presenting one's own perceptions of the research (Gouin, 2004), is an important and defining quality of feminist research (Olesen, 2000) and one I found empowering and freeing. A reflexive stance is also described as "political" in that "...it is a process of enlightenment about the standpoint from which one studies practice as well as about the practice itself" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 578). More explicitly, the crux of feminist research is to intentionally affect social change (Worell & Remer, 2003) and to empower the oppressed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

A constructivist and feminist paradigm are finely suited for the area of study of counseling and gender. Tenets of both of these philosophies can be applied to feminist counseling. Defining feminism and its application to counseling is complex; however, Worell and Remer (2003) offered this succinct expression, "Equality of opportunity, respect, and fair treatment for all persons is essential" (p. 17). Forrest (2004) refined and synthesized several sources in an attempt to simplify the core of feminist therapy into

four general categories: (a) attention to women's multiple identities, (b) a consciousness-raising approach, (c) egalitarian relationships, and (d) woman-valuing and self-validating. These central tenets support the need for advocacy and social justice in the field of counseling, as they relate to the work that remains to be done in the area of feminism and feminist therapy. This includes but is not limited to: "...the continuing recognition of multiple oppressions and the integration of this awareness with a gendered perspective and research on the efficacy of feminist therapy" (Evans, Kincade, Marbely, & Seem, 2005, p. 275). For me, an advocacy and social justice platform supports the importance of highlighting women and gender issues in counseling and informed my inquiry.

### **Personhood of the Researcher**

Consistent with the work of Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992), which showed a developmental progression away from reliance on external authority, I once naively thought the more I know - the more I read, the more I experience, the more I am taught - the more I will understand. Reading and learning come from other sources (i.e., experts, scholars, theorists); only experience comes from myself - and how could I trust my experience alone? And yet, I found myself realizing the more I understood, the less I and others knew. Amongst all of the concepts, theories, scholarly writings, I found solace in a quote from Albert Einstein "unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth" (ThinkExist, 2010). So, I finally began to trust my own experiences as valid.

I respect the complexity of understanding something as profound as knowledge. I also realize more and more the need for this exploration and inquiry and the very nature of this search to know or understand the world to be more confusing and ironically more freeing. It became apparent to me how critical it is to define one's view and

communicate this view to others. Rather than telling others what is real or true, I believe it is essential to share the possibilities of multiple truths and to respect and intentionally state the information as my view and my perspective.

My lessons in constructivism came very early in life; at a young age, I asked my mom what her favorite color was for a school assignment. She replied “I don’t have a favorite color.” Frustrated, I told her she **had to** have a favorite color; again, she replied “really, I don’t have a favorite color; I like all colors.” Now exasperated and confused, I was *simply* trying to complete a school assignment: - “find out what your mom’s favorite color is?” With tears in my eyes, I implored my mom to tell me her favorite color. Finally, annoyed by my persistence, she said “ok, I guess yellow.”

This was a typical example of how my mom explained circumstances in life to me. I rebelled against this way of understanding life’s mysteries for a long time, always trying to find “certainty”, determine the “right” and the “wrong”, and craving the “black” and the “white”. Now, years later, I have come full circle and embrace and appreciate my mom’s way of seeing the world.

The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research, and it is important to be transparent with my biases. I have provided the following information about myself in relation to the topic of study. I was raised on a dairy farm in the Midwest; the youngest of six kids, five sisters and one brother. My mom and dad treated each other with respect; they respected one another for their individual strengths and contributions to the family. My dad is a successful farmer, provider, and family man; my mom is a great mother and an amazing homemaker.

An interesting aspect of their relationship was dad did all the manly, husbandly duties; he plowed the fields, milked the cows, and made important, tough decisions that directly impacted our family's financial livelihood. Mom made sure we were all fed, had clothes to wear, and supported our emotional stability. But, mom did more than that; not only did she perform the admirable feminine obligations, she also contributed to the family by often working in some capacity on the farm (i.e., milking cows, running errands, and virtually anything dad requested or needed her to do). They were both very capable and successful in their roles, although it seemed mom was much more versatile and flexible. The joke always was, "Dad wouldn't know what to do without Mom; Dad doesn't even know how to make a can of soup!" Then, there were my siblings, who were my next formative role models, which included four older sisters, all smart and capable, and one brother, who was to follow in my father's footsteps. My brother, like my dad, only did "outside" work; my sisters, like my mom, did both "inside" and "outside" work. My sisters drove tractors and baked cakes, and my brother drove tractors. Looking back, I came to believe that women are very capable and resourceful.

There was another message in this experience, however, one that echoed the importance of men and "men's" work and whispered women's job is to serve and support men and their efforts. The first memory I have of experiencing this inconsistency or stark awareness was when my sisters were asked, or more aptly told, to do things for my brother. My mom instructed my sisters to clean or vacuum my brother's bedroom. I remember my sisters voiced their contempt for being asked to do this chore for him when they were also required to do much of the work he was doing. Why could he not take care of his own room, like they did? Another memory was my brother who was busy

outside, told my sisters to call his girlfriend to arrange his date or to make changes to his date plans. With conviction, my sisters voiced their disagreement with being instructed to do things for my brother that they felt he could and should do for himself and the injustice of them doing both “outdoor” and “indoor” work, while our brother only had to perform “outdoor” work.

Beyond these childhood experiences, I rarely encountered or recognized gender issues. Looking back, I think I was socially conditioned and generally unaware of the magnitude of sexual oppression of women. I was aware that women were raped and some men treated women disrespectfully, as if they were insignificant, weak, or incapable. For the most part, it seemed rare and unusual. I have realized in the last few years and in my research that oppression of women has been extensive and common, yet subtle and intangible to the point where it can appear fuzzy and unclear. My husband and I, although influenced by gender stereotypes, have assumed a less gender structured relationship. Often, when we attend social functions and bring a dish to share, people automatically pay compliments to me, when in fact it is more often than not my husband who prepared the dish. This type of encounter is not rare; to the contrary, it is so common that it is either hardly noticed or laughed off as amusing.

These descriptions provide the basis of who I am and to some degree frame the lens through which I conducted this study. Every effort was made to account for these biases where appropriate and to allow them to inform the process where necessary. These measures are discussed in further detail in the section on trustworthiness.



## Procedures

### Sampling

The nature of this case study was to understand more about male counseling students', in a graduate counseling program, perceptions of women. A particularistic case study was utilized (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) defined a particularistic case study as research that "focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon" (p. 29). Participants for this study were selected based on the following criteria: male, heterosexual, masters-level students currently enrolled in a graduate counseling program accredited by CACREP, and currently seeing clients either in a practicum or internship setting. Heterosexuality was utilized as a criterion, based on the recognition that it is a core component of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). CACREP accredited programs were selected to provide consistency across training and education requirements. A minimum of ten male students from universities in the Rocky Mountain region were recruited for the study. The final number of participants was determined when saturation was achieved.

Participants were selected based on a purposeful, nonprobability sampling criteria (Merriam, 1998), meaning the individuals were selected with the intention of being likely to contribute to the study. Additionally, typical participants (Merriam, 1998), those who provided a typical or normal representation of male graduate counseling students, were chosen. Program representatives were contacted via e-mail to provide a list of all male counseling students enrolled in the program, and their email addresses. Prospective participants were contacted and invited to participate. Once contact was made with potential participants at a site, each participant was asked for the names of other potential

participants who fit the criteria for inclusion; thus, the snowball sampling technique was utilized (Merriam, 1998).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection in case study research typically includes interviewing, observing, and analyzing documents (Merriam, 1998); for this particular study, data collection included two individual interviews, participants' artifacts, and participant and researcher journals. Through the use of multiple sources of data, triangulation was achieved, which increased the validity and credibility (i.e., trustworthiness) of the study (Merriam, 1998). These measures are discussed in further detail in the trustworthiness section.

**Individual interviews.** The audio-taped individual interviews were performed as person-to-person encounters (Merriam, 1998). Arrangements were made to meet participants in a quiet, private area on their campus. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit the individuals' thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perspectives.

An initial semi-structured interview was conducted with all participants. A set of guiding questions (Appendix B) were utilized to provide a balance of consistency between interviews and allowances were made for further exploration and follow-up. An informal conversational tone was set for the interviews. At the start of the interviews, participants were provided informed consent, which included an overview of the study, a review of their rights, and the protection of individual privacy. All participants signed an informed consent form prior to participation, selected a pseudonym, which was used to conceal their identity, and provided interviewee demographic information. The research process was explained, including the nature and duration of the interview, an overview of the research project, and a description of the follow-up interview. Interviews were

initiated by establishing rapport, taking a neutral stance, and providing an atmosphere that was, as Merriam (1998) suggested, respectful, nonjudgmental, and nonthreatening. Interview questions were intentionally crafted and an interview pretext was used to attend to social desirability response bias of the interviewees. The duration of each interview was approximately 60 minutes.

At the end of the first interview, a second interview was scheduled for 60 days in the future, thus allowing participants time to reflect on the questions of the study, time to engage in journaling, and to experience prolonged engagement with the topic under study. This also provided time for me to transcribe and analyze the data from the first interview. From the transcripts and the journals, any questions that emerged were collected for the second interview.

The second interview allowed for follow up and member checking. Member checking, a form of data triangulation (Janesick, 1999), was conducted by inviting the participants to review and respond to my initial analysis and interpretation of their responses. Categories and themes were shared with the participants to discuss their agreement or disagreement. Thus, allowing me to confirm my interpretation of meaning with them, especially when participant quotes were utilized. This also served to include the participant's active voice (Janesick, 1999).

**Participants' journals.** Janesick (1999) depicted participant journals as a research technique. Thus, this procedure was employed by asking each participant to respond electronically to four journal prompts (Appendix C). The first prompt was sent via email to the participants one week after the initial interview. They were asked to reflect on the first interview and journal about any additional thoughts or feelings they

had following our time together, relating to what was discussed. A second prompt was sent three weeks following the first interview. Attached to this prompt were the pictures from *Vogue* magazine, which were included in Willer's (2008) article. The participants were asked to write about what they think about the women depicted in the pictures if they were a client, peer and faculty member. The third prompt, sent five weeks post first interview, asked the participants to identify or reflect on what are expected qualities of a female client, peer and faculty member. The fourth, and last, prompt, sent via email one week prior to the second interview, asked the participants to consider and identify two artifacts which represent their perceptions of women, one they embrace, and another they find offensive.

Suggested artifacts included song lyrics, pictures, stories, and media representations (e.g., commercials, television shows, movies), but participants were encouraged to share any type of artifacts they discovered. They were asked to journal about these articles or representations and how it influenced them. The purpose of the participant journals was to deepen the research experience for participants and to provide supportive data for analysis (Janesick, 2004).

**Artifacts.** Participants were asked to bring artifacts, if tangible, to the second interview as well as a summary statement regarding what it has been like for them being involved in this research project. At the second interview, pictures were taken of the participant's artifacts as a method to record this additional research data. The purpose of the artifacts was to provide another source of participants' perspectives in a manner that did not involve dialogue and thus may represent a less socially desirable response.

**Researcher's journal.** Another contribution to the data set was a researcher's journal. The journal was utilized to aid in controlling researcher bias. My reflections were recorded in a researcher journal to capture my thoughts and reactions immediately following the interviews. Maintaining the journal assisted in keeping my experiences and biases separate from the participants; thus allowing for greater clarity when coding and analyzing themes. This was completed electronically and stored in the research database.

**Security measures.** The tapes, written documentation, and photographs of artifacts were kept in a secure fashion to protect the confidentiality of participants. Following the interviews the recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist who had signed a confidentiality agreement. All electronic files were reviewed for context and themes, beginning the method of data analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

As Merriam (1998) suggested, data analysis commenced as data were being collected to circumvent getting inundated and overwhelmed with information at the end of the data gathering process. In this sense, the researcher's journal was used throughout the research process to note potential categories to organize data based on completed interviews and participant journals received. A professional transcription service was utilized for tape transcription; a client confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the transcription company was obtained. The first transcript was reviewed and significant statements were tagged, beginning the process of category formation. Subsequent transcripts and data were reviewed in the same manner, and relevant information was either added to existing categories or additional categories were created. Adhering to the spirit expressed by Merriam (1998), "Conveying an understanding of the

case is the paramount consideration in analyzing the data” (p. 193), a narrative analysis of the participant’s stories and language was undertaken, meaning all data were holistically reviewed and then based on the data, broad categories were created. All the categories created based on the data collected were organized electronically in a case study database (Merriam, 1998). The data also included the transcribed audio interview files, and the participants’ and researcher’s journals. Keeping in mind the broad categories created, the data were again reviewed using a constant comparative coding method (Merriam, 2009) to identify patterns and sort the data into refined themes, using the research questions and theoretical framework as a guide. As the data were interpreted to reveal categories and themes, sorting was also based on similarity and uniqueness; thus, the analysis adhered to what Merriam (2009) labeled inductive and comparative method of analysis. A computer database was utilized to organize and track the coding of the data, using a matrix of categories and then further refining the data into themes.

### **Trustworthiness**

It was important to consider ways in which the quality of this research could be enhanced and supported. To produce valid, reliable, and ethical work, the following measures were adhered to for trustworthiness.

### **Internal Validity**

Internal validity, or credibility, is confirming the reality of the research findings (Merriam, 1998). To increase the internal validity of the study, it was important to go back and do member checking (i.e., return to the participants to confirm the credibility of the findings and interpretations) (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). At the second interview, participants were asked to review the analysis of their data to ensure we were

in agreement about my interpretations, including the categories, themes, and quotes that had been compiled. Any areas of disagreement were discussed and consensus reached where possible. The results of this process are reported in the results section. This additional procedure, also referred to as triangulation, added to the overall quality and credibility of the study (Creswell, 2007).

### **Reliability**

In terms of reliability, or consistency, a detailed audit trail was maintained. The audit trail, a documentation of the research process including challenges encountered and indication of how themes emerged (Merriam, 2009), was an important element in strengthening consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher's audit trail was recorded and retained electronically. Attention to this aspect provided other researchers the necessary insight into how the study was performed. The audit trail increased dependability and confirmability by systematically maintaining the documentation in an organized, secure, and well described manner.

### **External Validity**

External validity, or transferability, applies to the generalizability of the findings of a study (Merriam, 2009). Although external validity or generalizability is understood and viewed differently in qualitative research, it is still a factor to consider (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) acknowledged "Every study, every case, every situation is theoretically an example of something else. The general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered" (p. 225). The findings of this study were reported utilizing a rich, thick description of the data, thus contributing to the potential transferability of the

interpretation of the data. Thick and rich descriptions allowed readers to determine if the information is transferable to their particular situation (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Merriam, 1998).

### **Auditors**

An additional measure taken to ensure trustworthiness was the use of two auditors. The auditors were two members of my research committee, who had published qualitative research, had experience and knowledge pertaining to gender issues, and had trained counselors. These auditors were utilized to support the credibility of this study. The auditors independently reviewed two participant's transcripts, journal responses, artifact data, codes, and themes, for evidence of bias and over representation. Feedback from these independent reviews was provided and any disagreement was resolved via a process of clarification and consensus. Additionally, a random check of two other participant's data (interviews, journal responses, and artifacts) was performed by the auditors.

### **Ethics**

The preceding elements of trustworthiness were central to the ethical performance of this qualitative research study (Merriam, 2009). The responsibility lies with the individual investigators to ensure the research process is achieved in an ethical manner at all times; I acknowledged and accepted this accountability and utilized the procedures noted to support accountability.

### **Summary**

The findings of the study provided greater understanding of the perceptions of male counseling students of the women they interact with professionally. The intention



was to explore their perceptions to gain deeper insight into gender interactions in the counseling environment and how male counselors deal with the phenomenon of objectification of women. Discerning present perceptions of male counselors and exploring the foundation of those perceptions informed the profession to better address gender issues.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

I was fortunate to secure 10 willing, committed, and sincere participants. Throughout the research process, my appreciation for the participants' time and efforts grew. Along the sometimes arduous journey of this research endeavor, I often thought about my own devotion and sacrifices. It became increasingly evident to me that I was not alone in this project, and that the participants were beside me. I found comfort in this company, and the research became even more meaningful to me because of their investment in this process. To them I am truly grateful.

Prior to sharing the findings of this effort and consistent with the narrative tradition, it is important that I introduce you, the reader to each participant. This is undertaken at the risk of not being able to fully capture the person entirely but to share a few of their most salient characteristics related to the context of this research, which sought to gain a better understanding of male counseling students', in graduate counseling programs, perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. All participants are referred to by a pseudonym.

## **Meet the Participants**

### **Lee (29 years old): Traditional, yet Flexible**

Lee shared that he came from a traditional, conservative family; however, his parents demonstrated flexibility in their gender roles and supported flexibility in the gender roles of others. On the surface, Lee reported his family looked very conventional; his mom stayed home with the kids, and his dad worked outside the home. Lee recalled he had a close relationship with both of his parents and felt more deeply connected with his mom at an emotional level than his dad. “But, it [deep emotional closeness] was also allowed more”, he said, recognizing the cultural values and norms working within his own family. During his early life, sports did not catch his attention, rather he was “in touch” with his feelings and took pleasure in talking with people. He noted his parents were supportive of his interests and did not push him toward masculine gender type activities.

### **Jackson (23 years old): Embraces Androgyny**

Jackson described an internal-self and family environment supportive and embracing of androgynous gender expression. He recalled a close and open relationship with his parents and sisters. He was not a masculine boy and admitted he “possess[ed] a lot of stereotypical female qualities.” Influenced by culture and the media, Jackson felt his parents socialized him as male, and he instinctively adopted cues to play with boy toys and boy sports. Jackson described an intentional avoidance of masculinity, as he chose to be around less masculine men, was not physically aggressive (i.e., ran track, did not play football), did not get into physical altercations, and joined choir. Yet, he felt a

sting from society and a culturally imposed separation from masculinity by being shunned by more masculine men for those choices. Jackson recounted:

...people are playing kickball, and they're playing and you're not allowed to come over because you're not fit enough to come over and do it. Even though I knew I could pick up and play with them, it was more of a let's keep you out because you don't have these qualities.

**Matt (35 years old): Blunt, no Bias Just Biology**

In his direct fashion, Matt quickly let me know that he has little bias towards women, and much less than most people. Matt explained, "I can't define gender so well, because of gender roles because I don't have that bias." He attributed his lack of bias to his close relationship with his mom and the gender role in his family. Matt's mom was a strong role model in his life; she was dominant and blunt. Matt's father did the cooking and cleaning. Matt's brother, on the other hand, he said "is a womanizer." For Matt, it was difficult to even comment on his view of gender and gender roles, but he ultimately declared "...I see it as everybody being different. And I don't think gender matters. All it comes down to is our sexual organs."

**Pedro (42 years old): Gender Fluidity**

Pedro expressed his view of gender as, "I kind of have this perception that gender is very fluid". He shared that he came from a large family, which he defined as "...very rural and conservative..." His family, particularly his father and brothers, valued and protected traditional gender and sexuality roles. As a result of his internal beliefs and a more open view of gender and sexuality, Pedro related and maintained a closer relationship with his mother and sisters. According to Pedro, the women in his family

showed greater flexibility, understanding, and warmth for this continuum of gender and sexuality; the views and beliefs he comfortably adopted. Pedro also reported he has been very intentional with his own children, demonstrating a range of emotions broader than the array of male-stereotyped behaviors he learned were acceptable and expected from the men in his family.

**Bob (29 years old): Created from Scratch**

Bob reported that his family has a history of mental illness, abuse, and broken relationships. His father, he recounted, was a volatile and controlling man. Bob said he grew up in a “rigid patriarchal family” and noted, “we had dinner at the same time every single night when I was growing up. It was always at 6:30 every single night on the table.” Raised in an isolated environment, Bob felt “brainwashed” into a world where women were disrespected, people were not to be trusted, and men (i.e., his dad) were in control. When Bob finally escaped his family life by joining the military, he quickly realized he did not believe the teachings of his dad and began to intentionally develop his own beliefs and ideals. Different from his dad, Bob thought women were worthy of respect and thus he created his own way of being in and seeing the world. In spite of all of this, he maintains a relationship with his mom, who complains voraciously about his dad.

**Nick (40 years old): Angry and Partially Aware**

Nick identified himself as a person from a middle class, conservative town. Originating from the Midwest, Nick described he grew up in a country environment, where church was a part of the lifestyle. In this calm, picturesque backdrop, Nick’s

childhood was marred by his “attachment wounds” with his mother. He was deeply impacted by his parent’s divorce and his mom’s abandonment of the family, “when I was four and then going through the '70s, it was more typical for women to get a full time job and find power. And, once my mom did, she was gone and they divorced – my parents divorced.”

Painfully aware of his “counter transference” issues surrounding his mom, Nick acknowledged it affects how he relates to clients. Now, as an adult, Nick shares his concerns and angst over blurred gender roles and expectations and the impact on intimate relationships, “...just of loss, but I've been calling it the death of intimacy because it's happening at a rapid level. I feel like it's happening at a rapid level...men and women, their roles have become equalized.” Nick identified the equalization of gender roles seems to have negatively affected intimacy between genders while simultaneously remaining unaware of the impact of his privileged status as a man (e.g., his mom should not have hurt him by seeking her own freedom due to the restrictive gender roles prior to the 1970s).

### **Trey (34 years old): Family and Church**

Trey identified strongly with his intertwined church and family background and upbringing. His family had strong roots in religious affiliation and Christian practices as a way of life. He described his father as soft-spoken and gentle but with specific gender ideas. Trey’s father had narrow and dichotomous definitions of masculine expression and gender roles. For example, Trey learned from his dad that “good” men do not wear earrings or act “feminine,” they go to church, can express emotions, and are not required to play sports. In his Christian environment, he was taught about hierarchy; dads were

the heads of the household and women were not spiritual leaders in the church. They respected his family and church foundation and seems aware of the occasional lack of flexibility and potential use of one's religion to veil human transgressions.

**John (47 years old): John Wayne-Men are Men and Women are for Protectin'**

John recounted "...I grew up also in a pretty traditional, John Wayne male environment... There was a lot of big, macho, be tough, make a lot of money, get the pretty girl, produce lots of kids, that sort of thing." These were the messages John heard about what it meant to be a man. He described his dad as a caretaker of women, "...my dad was very much the caretaker for my mother." With his sister, his dad was "kind and loving, and tolerant and nurturing," and with him, his dad was a "tough guy."

John's impressions of women were less clear and defined. According to him, his mom struggled with mental health issues and was not able to nurture him to the capacity he desired, so he sought support elsewhere. John's paternal grandma was a strong and dominant woman. These family relationships had a profound and dramatic impact on John's life and his relationships with women. He adopted the male-role of protector with his younger sister and with his ex-wife; "I married someone who was a damsel in distress and tried to rescue her, and that didn't work." Looking back, he saw how his family environment and his gender role-models impacted his relationships, including his marriage. In subsequent relationships, women have directly told him that they need a partner more than a caretaker and he continues to reflect on these deeply held ideas about gender and relationships.

**Rich (38 years old): Families are Changing**

Rich described the era of his growing up years as one of change. His mom was a stay at home mom, but around him, lives were not as stable and family structures were changing. Rich relayed he understood, or at least in hindsight, that divorce was occurring more frequently and more households were being run by single moms. As Rich noted, “that was a kind of puzzling thing, you know, like single parent families and mom – homes run by single moms, was kind of a new thing.” Although Rich experienced the traditional stay at home mom, he expressed fluidity in gender roles. “I helped her with the laundry, and I helped her with the cooking, and I helped her fold laundry and I helped her make the beds. I don’t think I’m any less of a man. So, I don’t think there really are any gender roles.” Another strong influence on Rich was sports, “...I was heavily involved with sports, and as a boy, being socialized into – it’s like, well, boys are the rough and tumble sports – and we’re socialized into sports whether we’re jocks or not, it’s just part of boyhood.”

**Doug (34 years old): Parents are Gender Template**

Doug’s dad was a successful businessman and was the financial provider for his family. His mom he said was the nurturer, “...she worked as well, too though but it seemed it was sort of like her first role was still mom and house maker.” Doug was heavily influenced by his parents; they were his "template for who men and women are." He stated it “affect[s] how he approaches men and women.” Doug described his dad as “... very much an introvert and kind of aloof and withdrawn.” And, he added,



“Sometimes severe but also like very warm at times.” He noted the differences in how he relates to his mom and dad,

...now that I think about it, whenever I talk about my mom or my dad, I realize like I always – I talk to my mom more and I talk to my mom about my dad. My dad and I don’t really have a heart to heart so much.

His talks with his dad are authentic but with less focus on emotions.

Doug shared that he did not feel any gender pressure from his family. His brother was an athlete, and he was not. He did not feel any pressure either way from his parents. His parents allowed for those flexibilities. Although Doug spoke of how deeply and broadly his parents influenced him, he shared with pride how he in turn impacted his dad. Because of Doug’s experiences in group counseling as a young adult, he became more comfortable with hugging and expressing feelings, as a result his dad has become more comfortable with hugging and talking about feelings, too.

### **Sources of Data**

All participants were over the age of 18, male, self-identified as heterosexual, masters-level students currently enrolled in a graduate counseling program, and currently seeing clients either in a practicum or internship setting. The counseling programs were accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), identified as CACREP equivalent, or accredited by another professional body, such as the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) or equivalent. Initially, participants were sought from CACREP programs only; however, due to a lack of an adequate number of respondents, I expanded the pool of potential participants by amending the participant pool to include AAMFT programs or accreditation by another professional body.

As noted in Chapter III, participants were recruited by representatives of their counseling programs who forwarded my email solicitation for participation. Participants contacted me, and a first interview was scheduled. This process was utilized to ensure voluntary participation and confidentiality of participants. To further protect the participants' identity, their demographics were summarized for reporting purposes but were in no way associated with their pseudonyms. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 47 years, with a median age of 34.5 years old. All participants identified as white or Caucasian.

The first and second individual interviews ( $N = 20$ ) were completed between February 17, 2011 and August 28, 2011. This timeframe, along with the duration spent coding and auditing, demonstrated prolonged engagement with the data. At the first interview, all participants received, discussed and signed the informed consent, and were given the opportunity to ask any clarifying questions. Of the 20 interviews, 19 were conducted in person and one telephonically due to schedule conflicts. The initial interviews varied in duration from 25 minutes to 53 minutes, with a median length of 38 minutes. The second-set of interviews ranged from eight minutes to 53 minutes in length, with a median duration of 22 minutes. The interview that was done over the telephone was the shortest in duration; eight minutes. The brief duration of this interview was likely impacted by three factors: (a) the participant being at his office, (b) I wanted to be mindful of his time, and (c) not being face-to-face to gauge his non-verbal responding to whether or not his time was limited.

In addition to the interviews, participants were sent four journal prompts via email after the first and before the second interview. The timing and content of the prompts

were as follows: the first prompt was sent one week following the first interview to elicit any additional thoughts or feelings the participants had regarding the first interview, and the second prompt was sent three weeks following the first interview. In this prompt, the participants were asked to examine pictures from *Vogue* magazine and respond to the images of women depicted in the pictures as if those women were a client, peer and faculty member. The third prompt was sent five weeks following the first interview and participants were asked to identify and reflect on the personal qualities they expect from a female client, peer and faculty member. And, in the fourth and final prompt, sent one week prior to the second interview, participants were asked to identify two artifacts (physical representations) which aligned with their positive and negative perceptions of women (i.e., one they embraced and one they found offensive). Participants were asked to journal about these articles or representations and the meaning for them. All participants responded to every prompt.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

All transcripts and journal prompts were reviewed for accuracy and clarity and the process of open coding was initiated. Participants' statements were read and considered for meaning and perception related to participants' views of gender, gender roles, and gender expectations of female clients, peers, and faculty members. Statements were identified and placed into broad categories with similar meanings. To assist in this process ATLAS.ti 6.2, qualitative data analysis software was utilized. The software was used to organize and manage the data, which supported the analysis. This comprehensive, holistic overview of the data resulted in 1,422 codes containing specific information related to the data; 222 of these codes originated from a combination of the

journal prompts and artifacts. The other 1,200 codes were derived from the interview transcripts. These codes were grouped into 15 main codes or broad categories.

Simultaneously, and through a recursive process, the categories and themes were later aligned with the corresponding research questions.

Once the broad categories were determined, the data were reviewed a second time using a constant comparative coding method (Merriam, 2009) to identify patterns and sort the data into refined themes; the research questions and theoretical framework were used as a guide. As the data were interpreted to reveal categories and themes, sorting was also based on similarities and uniqueness; thus, the analysis adhered to what Merriam (2009) labeled inductive and comparative methods of analysis. The Atlas computer database was utilized to organize and track the coding of the data, enabling me to use a matrix of categories to further refine the data into themes. The codes were grouped under the appropriate themes, further linking codes back to the various research questions. The data included the individual interviews, the participant's journal prompts, and the participants' artifacts.

The participants' choice of artifacts provided a meaningful and interesting part of the research. The artifacts seemed important because they evoked a very personal and rich response to the participants' perceptions of women. They also serve as a means for deeper and more thoughtful reflection on their thoughts and feelings about women. In the fourth prompt, I asked participants to:

Please consider and identify two artifacts which represent your perceptions of women, one you embrace, and another you find offensive. Suggested artifacts might include song lyrics, pictures, stories, and media representations (e.g., commercials, television shows, movies), but you are welcome to share any type of artifacts you discover. Please journal about these articles or representations and how they influence you. Please bring the artifacts, if tangible, to the second

interview. Lastly, please complete a summary statement regarding what it has been like for you being involved in this research project.

Here is a global description of the participants' artifacts. They included offensive and negative television representations of gender (both female and male); positive and negative ideas, images or pictures of women; and song lyrics which were viewed as both offensive and supportive of women. These expressions of both helpful and unhelpful ideas of the male participants' perceptions of females are representations of each of their personal experience and bias. When viewed collectively with the participants' family background and characteristics, their own experiences of oppression or distress, painted a vibrant picture of their vision of their perceptions of women. The themes described in this chapter include an integration of the results derived from the artifacts.

### **Organization of Findings**

#### **Researcher's Assumptions/Biases**

Based on my personal experience, societal norms, and research, I expected the participants to have gender bias and some degree of sexism or objectification of women. It was my hope that men in graduate counseling training would hold those beliefs to a lesser degree and have greater self-awareness of their perceptions and biases than men who had not encountered gender informed counselor training. The data revealed that two participants, Pedro and Jackson, to some degree, reflected my assumptions and demonstrated greater self-awareness. These two participants voiced less gender biased references toward women and acknowledged greater self-awareness and reflections related to their personal process. However, the remaining participants ( $n= 8$ ) appeared to uphold culturally supported gender biased views or lacked the self-awareness in regards

to how their beliefs objectify women despite having formal training in cultural competency and a non-judgmental approach to counseling.

### **Measures to Control for Researcher Bias**

Several measures were taken to control for or identify researcher bias. To assist in identifying and keeping track of my biases and thoughts, I maintained a researcher journal. The journal was used to note thoughts or reactions to the interviews, journal prompt responses or artifacts, readings or research, interactions with the participants, and auditors' feedback. Keeping an active journal helped me to be aware of my own reactions to the process. While coding, I also used memos to capture reactions to the transcripts and the process of coding the participants' narratives. Although I had a preconceived notion that males do hold sexist ideas toward women, I was expecting male counselors would hold less bias and be open and looking for ways to explore their attitudes to produce change. When participants shared stereotypical gender views, I encountered a sense of affirmation that this research was purposeful and needed. When participants did not appear to hold stereotypical gender ideas or views, I experienced a sense of appreciation and intrigue. I was curious about how they came to their understanding or way of seeing gender and gender ideals that were different from culturally imposed ones.

Two auditors were used to support the accuracy and trustworthiness of this research study. The auditors provided independent feedback regarding the coding, analysis, and interpretation of the participant's data. The auditors, two members of my dissertation committee, experienced in qualitative research, reviewed participants' transcripts, artifacts, and journal prompts. Through this iterative process, numerous

questions and perspectives were raised and addressed through a process of discussion and verification. Most notably, the bias I became aware of through this process was that my outlook on males and females was influenced and shaped (biased) by cultural and personal experiences. Specifically, I realized there were varying degrees of feminist awareness, and my feminist lens was still in development. There were several examples of incidents where one auditor noted either sexual objectification or more overt sexism than I had. After a rigorous discussion, I understood that I may have overlooked several critical statements by participants. I attributed this difference in perspective to the possibility that I continue to be influenced by self-objectification sexism or my own benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Finally, I engaged in a member checking process with participants. Each participant was provided the transcripts of their interviews and with notations of the derived themes. Each was asked to review the transcripts and themes for accuracy and representativeness. Ninety percent of the participants provided a response to the request for member checking. All confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and appropriateness of the codes and derived meanings, with five participants providing additional comments, which did not affect or change the findings. By embracing a constructivist way of understanding individuals and phenomena, I support sharing the participants' stories and narratives in a way which is more impartial. I was able to take their words and thoughts at face value, albeit not completely without my interpretation or bias however.

### **Themes**

All codes from all data sources were subsumed into the following 15 broad categories: *Female Client Expectations*, *Female Peer Expectations*, *Female Faculty*

*Expectations, Male Client Expectations, Male Peer Expectations, Male Faculty Expectations, Gender Roles, Personal Experiences and Views of Gender Roles, Role of Gender in Counseling, Personal View on Attractiveness, Personal View on Competence, Attractiveness influence on Competence, Reading Sexual Attraction, Female Appearance, and Response to Research Process.* From these categories, I synthesized, extrapolated, and reported participants' meaning in the form of nine themes: *Importance of Gender in Counseling, Gap in Gender Training, Men and Women are Different, Women, the Softer Half, Looks Matter, for Women, Patriarchy's Oppression of Men, It's Not Men's Fault, Women have the Power, Lack of Self-Awareness and Contradictions, and You Can't Trust Most Women.* Participants' quotations provided a thick and rich description of their experience of the phenomena.

### **Importance of Gender in Counseling**

Virtually all of the participants noted that gender played a significant role in counseling. Gender was present in who they were and how they acted, believed, counseled, and seemed to influence their interactions with clients, peers, and faculty. Participants' recognized the influence of gender in aspects such as clients' preferences for, and degrees of comfort with, either a female or male therapist. For example, Nick discussed how clients are initially asked if they have a gender preference in their counselor

... it's interesting to see that on the phone during the first interview, one of our questions is, 'Hey, do you have a preference gender, female or male counselor?' And a lot – most of the time they say, 'No, no. Just somebody I can connect with.' And then once you get to the intake and they have seen you and they have seen our office and kind of what we're about, the answer changes 70 percent of the time [the client prefers a female counselor].



Further, several participants noted that certain clients were likely to have a preference or felt more or less comfortable with a female or male. Nick referenced how a female who experienced sexual abuse by a man would likely want to see a female counselor, speaking for the potential client he stated: “Yeah because, ‘My uncle raped me. I don't want to be around a man. I don't trust all of you.’” Trey also commented on the impact of gender on females who have been sexually assaulted, “...males can trigger a lot of trauma, being a male [counselor] with a female client.” A couple of participants also talked about the dynamics between male client and the counselor depending on their gender. Matt offered the following observation:

There definitely is a different persona in a room when there's a male therapist, and there's definitely a different climate in the room when there's a male client. And, you can see that on video tape, where if there are two women [co-therapists in practicum] orchestrating the session, the male client will feel like he has that dominance. And then, if you go back and look at a tape where a male therapist walks in a room with a male client, there's not that big push/pull like there's a tug of war going on.

Even when participants asserted gender was not a factor, it seemed to emerge outside of participants' awareness, as it did for Matt in his third journal prompt. First he noted, “I would hold the same expectations I have for women as I do for men.” This statement was immediately followed by the expectation of stereotypical gender differences; “...women can be more emotional than men. I would expect a session with a female client would be more emotional;” this demonstrated a continued gender-based stereotyping and expectations by participants who fervently professed a lack of gender bias.

## Gap in Gender Training

Most participants noted concerns related to the relative presence, intensity and adequacy of gender training or awareness in their counselor training programs. The “gap” in gender training was reflected in the sentiments and commentary from participants regarding how gender potentially impacts counselors, clients, and the process of supervision. Most participants, ( $n = 7$ ), reported that the topic of gender was covered in their program; however, 30% ( $n = 3$ ), were less definitive, stating, “Somewhat, yeah”, “a little bit”, and “If I remember so, yeah.”

Pedro’s responses were indicative of vagueness and uncertainty related to gender focused training. He initially indicated in his interview that the topic of gender was covered during his training, yet in his first journal prompt response, he expressed needing more guidance, and in his second interview, he expressed feeling that he was inadequately trained in gender issues. He explained, “And, I think the thing that's most shocking to me, at least in [his program], Masters of Arts in Counseling is how little attention is really devoted to gender as a topic.” He went on to say:

I guess my feeling is that it's a topic that needs more attention and more consideration in CACREP affiliated schools as far as what is the kind of – I don't feel – I guess what my take from it is I don't feel adequately trained going into the counseling profession in dealing really with gender identity or gender issues in general... in my program, here, I had one class devoted to gender in Multicultural Counseling, and the only other time it was ever brought up was in one class in ethics, you know, and that was just in regarding sexual contact with clients after they terminate services and the ethical issues around that. So, those were the only two times that gender ever was discussed in the entire time.

Considering the importance of gender in counseling and counseling relationships, some of the participants realized the need for improved training in this realm.

A second element, which emerged from the data and warrants identification under the theme of gap in gender training, was *Therapist-Client Sex* and participants' perception about sexual attraction. Most participants noted passive messages related to the potential for sexual attraction to [female] clients in their training, and participants appeared unable to distinguish heterosexual bias or gender-stereotyped expectations related to the *risk or threat* related to counseling female clients. Lee stated:

I don't know that it's [therapist-client sex] been addressed in the training so much as just saying supervision is a good thing to have...It's just something, I think, does need to be addressed, and I think that it's something that counselors - I do believe in counselors getting constant supervision throughout their career because I believe that that's one way to help deal with those types of things and to be aware of when that might be happening.

John had a different experience in his program and indicated, "It's certainly never been discussed. I can't think of anytime that it was discussed to any of our classes. And, in supervision at work or internship I openly discuss it with an attractive 30 year-old supervisor." He noted:

I think it would help if it [therapist-client sex] was presented. I think it would really help if -- and I'm sure it was presented to a certain degree in ethics, because the no sex with your clients or as we call it, 'When is it okay to have sex with your clients?' Which would be never.

Pedro also shared his dismay at not having an opportunity in his training to openly discuss and explore gender issues and sexual attraction to clients and how to deal with this issue. He remarked:

...you know, those issues can be interpersonal or inter-psychic or whatever, you know. If we have issues - like in one of the prompts, you know, it's like what do you do if you are sexually attracted to one of your clients. I mean do you disclose that in session, do you, you know, cover it up? You know, what's appropriate? And none of that's ever really talked about in any of the training that we've received as counselors in training.

Several participants had previously considered how they would handle this type of concern. John offered that prevention of this type of boundary violation could occur if counselors were more centered or more aware of their personal sexual needs to avoid “stepping over the line.” He added that it was critical to acknowledge sexual tension as a male therapist (with females) and to admit it to yourself and a supervisor to deflate the power of a secret. Lee talked fairly openly about how he has counseled young female clients who he has, “had sexual thoughts about that I've thought about and I've explored.” Interestingly, Lee initially acknowledged that sexual attraction and tension was an issue for male counselors, but he quickly pointed out that this is not just an issue or concern for male counselors, “...and I do want to say that I think it’s important for women to be aware of that as well.” Then, he seemed to opt for confusion “... I don’t know that it’s more for men or more for women.” He maintained awareness about client sexual attraction and offered he was concerned that women may be more likely to ignore or be uncomfortable with sexual attraction, which “could become a problem.” Lee did not seem to recognize that his view of female sexual awareness (i.e., ignorance or discomfort with sexualized tension or attraction) was in and of itself a gender-based stereotype (i.e., women do not think about sex). He noted:

I almost am worried about women in the field not thinking that it's going to come up, not being concerned about it. Because it's when it – when you ignore it, when it doesn't seem like it's an issue, that's when it becomes an issue and that's when it becomes a problem.

From the participants’ open and candid remarks, training and discussions regarding sexual attraction and tension with clients appears to be a vital topic to be addressed in counselor training.

## **Men and Women are Different**

Participants expressed a variety of opinions about whether females and males are similar or different and to what degree they are such. Most participants expressed seeing both similarities and differences; however, several participants' responses broadly ranged from men and women are mostly similar to vastly different. The explanations of these similarities and differences were just as varied, with some participants noting the role of cultural attribution and some noting the influences of biology. Matt, for example, struggled to even answer the question, "I think women can be just as manly as men, and men can be just as womanly as women. So, I can't. I can't answer that one for you." Pedro saw gender as a continuum "...I kind of have this perception that gender is very fluid...But I also believe that there's a lot of culturally-imposed expectations that manifest themselves in the way people act and exhibit their gender and the things that are involved."

Those who saw differences talked about the reasons for the differences being a combination of biology and culture. Lee stated it as:

There are big differences, and I think a lot of that – I think some of it's biological, but I tend to think that most of it today is just the culture and the gender roles that we've been assigned. There are biological differences that I believe part of why men deal with aggression more has to do with just the biological makeup. Women, I think, deal with some of the – a broader range of emotions, I think, because of their biological makeup and what's going – but, then again, a lot of that, too, is what's allowed and what's not allowed.

It was interesting to see the variation in the way participants viewed and explained gender, gender differences, and how and to what degree being male or female affected the roles one plays. Participants did not seem to have a clear sense of how and why gender differences existed. Lee acknowledged biology and then went on to say "...I tend

to think that most of it today is just the culture and the gender roles that we've been assigned."

### **Women, the Softer Half**

Participants reported, for the most part, typical gender role expectations for women, "I think that most times men fall into the stereotype of not being able to express emotion where women are more emotional." Pedro, when referencing female clients, reported, "They just seem more open and willing to accept and be present and be a part of what's going on, and not nearly as resistant as males." This sentiment was shared by others and a general consensus was that women are more emotional. As a result, as clients, they are *easier* to work with than male clients. Lee noted, "I think they're easier to work with." Matt's description of typical female client, peer and faculty member was consistent with Lee's aforementioned statement, and Matt noted a view of women as softer and less academic:

Peer wise they're very soft, very - which is good. I'm not saying any of this is bad. Very soft and genuine, and faculty wise they're less academic -- the male staff is more - they seem to be more academic. And, client wise, they're more emotional than the male - then the male kind of person. Being that I only have one right now. But, they're very emotional and they're very - they don't want to hear the direct responses. They're very surprised to the blunt - some of the blunt aspects that I give them in my practicum.

According to participants, women were perceived as more relational (i.e., more social and like to or need to process or talk about issues with others). Doug stated,

...they're more verbal... More socially connected, either having like a network of social relationships that they're trying to work out, try to improve those relationships and that's kind of a key thing. And, they're also more open and in groups, more talkative. More willing to share.

Matt described a difference in how women and men respond; men are more succinct, and women tend to be wordy. Matt used an example from his parents, "...I

know from personal experience, I know this is how I felt. My mom, ‘Blah, blah.’ When my dad spoke, I don't know if it was like the tone of his voice, he's louder it catches your attention more.” He added, “Males are looking for the answers or wanting to give the answers more. Whereas women want to sugarcoat it.” Matt wondered if this is what contributed to men being listened to more by others, “...I was talking to a fellow student, [a] female student that [said] when I spoke a lot of people listened. And, she said that could be a big part with you being male. And so, she also said that in my sessions that when I speak, the eyes tend to be on me rather than back and forth.”

Matt viewed male and female faculty differently in speech and behavioral expectations. Matt said:

Truthfully, I've only had two male professors, and they really went by the book. Well, one in particular, and he's - yeah sure he had a little role-playing and just -- but he was really academic, went by the book and this is what it is and this is how you do it and really taught - I liked it. I liked it a lot. Whereas, a lot of the female instructors were more, ‘What's your opinion?’ to the students, and let the students bring out their own emotions in the classroom, which is fine too. I think an even - if they're evened out a little bit more it would be really good.

I noted, as did one of the auditors, that Matt referred to the males as “professors” and the females as “instructors” hence a different degree of prestige awarded by gender.

Additionally, referencing teaching “by the book” seemed to respond to the perceived authority and credibility [textbooks] of and directiveness of male professors in contrast to the emergent learning designs and ambiguity perceived to be presented by female professors. Overall, women were identified as softer, more emotional, more concerned with relationships, and more verbal than men.

### **Looks Matter, for Women**

A complex montage of opinions and beliefs surrounding women's clothing and appearance emerged from the data. What appeared to be lookism, the determination of a woman's value and intellect based solely on her outward appearance (Granleese & Sayer, 2006), was referenced in participants' perceptual narratives about female clients, peers, and faculty. Stated by Doug, "my initial assumption is that they [women] are more or less objectified by others, men and women alike, for their physical beauty." In the first interview, participants read a scenario regarding three women who were dressed in a variety of ways. Participants were asked to describe their impressions of these women in terms of intelligence, attractiveness, and kindness and to identify which woman would most likely represent a client, peer, or professor. All of the participants, except Pedro, had a critical reaction to the woman described to be wearing a short skirt. For example Bob stated:

But, it's more the short skirt type thing because it's just that I just see it as attention seeking type of thing where you want people to look at you, and you want - you're trying to get at something. Either it (pause)... and maybe you were just raised that you wear miniskirts all the time.

The responses were not positive in nature; participants' attributed scheming motives to women's behavior (i.e., dressing in a short skirt), expressed feeling at some level they were being taken advantage of by women, and led many participants to pathologize the women in the pictures. For example, when considering the picture of the woman in a short skirt, Nick stated,

...I would be on guard and on the look-out for personality features of insecurity, narcissism and possible attachment disorders. Personally, I am hyperaware and on-guard around women who seemingly 'use' their sexuality in an overt way to express themselves. I tend to not trust someone like the woman in picture one until I get to know them.



Trey commenting on the same picture related,

If they were a client, I would wonder about their insecurities; I would probably also think about how sad it was that they had to put so much time and thought into outward appearances. I would wonder if they were narcissistic, but would probably more likely assume that they have fragile self-esteem/self-worth.

Doug added, “Men may ignore or downplay their [women in short skirts] intelligence.

They may use them for sex or as a trophy. Other women may be jealous and therefore undercut them.”

Rich, Lee, and Bob seemed critical and concerned about the women in the pictures, wondering aloud about their potential problems with substance abuse, eating disorders, exploitation, and ageism, and recognized the exploitative aspects for women, such as airbrushing. Rich said this after thinking more deeply about the Vogue pictures, “But then, also, there is the reality of okay, with airbrushing, with exploitation, with image and things like that, like I know what’s really going on here” and

Well, like with the models, just knowing that so many of them have problems, you know, substance abuse and eating disorders and knowing that it’s such an exploitive industry where if you’re 35 you’re just way over the hill and, you know, I don’t like the image that they’re selling either half the time, you know?

The woman in the short skirt in the interview question scenario was not the only woman to be viewed in a disparaging way. Three participants considered the casually dressed woman as less attractive and less intelligent; “Intelligence, the woman in the middle (the one dressed casually) probably less intelligent than the other two” and “Attractiveness, the second’s (the one dressed casually) less attractive...the other two (the one in the short skirt and the one in pants), similar.” Whereas, the woman in the pants was considered the most intelligent; “The third one’s probably more intelligent than

the first one” and “...the last one seems more professional.” Matt said he would not have any bias or judgment, yet stated:

Do I look down on them for anything they wore? No, I don't care. If I were to be - if you were to take me and put me in the situation of being the client and who would I have a little bit more respect for, I would have more respect for the person in the slacks.

Discordant and self-contradictory statements existed among participants narratives related to attractiveness or apparent physical beauty and competence. Some participants recounted that they would view someone more attractive as more competent; however, others thought they may actually see someone as incompetent for being too attractive, and still another view on the issue was that they would see it the other way around – they would view a competent person as more attractive.

Related to attractiveness negatively impacting one's competence, Doug hypothesized, "I do think though that it's probably easier to undercut a woman's competence if she's also attractive just because - kind of like the dumb blonde sort of thing." Further supporting Doug's comments, John offered,

No, I don't think initially I would give them more credibility because they're attractive. I think, to be honest with you, the flip side would be in my mind. Oh, you're really pretty and you draw a lot of attention, or handsome and draw a lot of attention, you better be incredibly competent. I'm going to hold you to a higher standard 'cause you probably got in the door because of that. You know what I'm saying?

And, he continued:

You know, that's funny. I think - and I've thought this for a long time - attractive people get a pass to start with. Almost always, people are a little bit more readily accepting on the first day. But, on the second day, if they find out you don't know what the hell you're doing, you're just pretty and stupid, you know. *[Laughter]* And, that can only get you so far. We were talking about this yesterday at lunch actually at work, about drug reps coming in and hosting lunches and breakfast and everything.

Doug theorized about how being attractive assists one in “earning” prestige,

Yeah, again and that’s another thing is I think it does - I mean, the popular belief that if someone’s attractive and they’re in a high position that they probably earned it because they were attractive. That’s probably somewhat true, I don’t know.

### **Patriarchy’s Oppression of Men**

This theme represents the participants’ narratives which speak to awareness of patriarchy and the effect on masculinity. For the purpose of this study, patriarchy is defined as: “A sociopolitical system characterized by male privilege and power” (Brown Travis & Meginnis-Payne, 2001, Glossary). Similar to the participants’ experiences and personal stories, the participants displayed a range of gender sensitivity related to the effects of patriarchy on masculinity. I assumed participants’ personal stories or their oppressive experiences contributed to and shaped their thoughts and beliefs related to gender. For example, Pedro and Jackson shared specific examples when they were challenged or judged based on masculine standards. Pedro:

I don’t think I fit into the typical – I personally have struggled with it because I don’t fit into what the cultural expectations place. So, with that in mind, it has been something that’s more in my own radar, where I’ve kind of noticed what culture expects – it shows up more to me because it’s more of an affront to me in what – you know I’ve been working for 20 years in the health care field, where it’s predominantly women, and so I’ve kind of – even though I’m a white, European male, I’ve been in a minority role in how culture views where men and women should be placed in, at least in the workforce.

These two individuals expressed a greater awareness of gender sensitivity, perhaps because they had experienced the oppression of being different. Pedro did not conform to occupational gender expectations and has worked primarily in a female dominated profession in the medical field in a caretaker capacity. Jackson indicated at times peers and society have tried to keep him on the “male track” when he has taken a perceived detour by participating in less masculine activities, such as track and choir:

...you know what's interesting is that in middle school I started joining choir, and I got some – not negative feedback – but just some like questions from people about, “Well, why are you doing this?” and it almost felt like society pushing back, like you're not supposed to do this because you're male, you know – especially in middle school.

These participants, who shared personal experiences of having felt challenged by masculine norms, appeared to embrace greater gender sensitivity as evidenced by their narrative, perceptions, and beliefs surrounding gender and women.

Not only did the participants identify their own personal struggles with patriarchy and masculinity, some shared challenges experienced by other men. Pedro talked about a male counseling group he is facilitating and how the members are aggressive and competitive with one another and how he sees them succumbing to cultural pressures; “... (they) almost exacerbate the role that society seems to put on males.” Rich thoughtfully discussed his concerns about some of the men in the group counseling sessions he runs, “And, that's one of the things we talk about in this men's group, is what does society teach us, what do we feel driven to do as men, and how much of it can we look at and say, ‘You know what, how I am is okay as a man.’” He witnesses these men struggling with society's messages and how they are suppose to be competitive and assertive, without being too aggressive:

...we expect so much of men now. It's – there's this duality. Well, you have to be sensitive, but you have to be rugged, and you have to be tough, but not too tough, and you have to be the go-getter, but not – you have to be motivated and go out and be successful, but not so much that you're working 12 hours a day, 'cause you need to come home and play with the kids too. And so, it's, the messages we get is, be successful, but not overly successful. Be driven, but not too competitive.

Rich also offered that is hard to find good examples or images of men on television; “We are either killing someone, trying to kill someone who killed someone, or we are idiot

buffoons who stumble through life and are complete morons at being fathers or husbands and are just made fun of and laughed at the whole time.” He added that he imagines the ways women are portrayed are unattractive to women, too. Then, he avowed “the way women are portrayed is it any wonder why men don't want to engage in relationships any longer than it takes to get laid?” Rich summarized that on television men are portrayed as worthless or violent and women as victims and sex objects.

Awareness of the effects of patriarchy on masculinity may be a helpful avenue for some to be more aware of patriarchy effects on women and on culture in general. For Pedro and Jackson, in particular, this seemed to be the case. Their personal experiences with masculine ideals and oppression likely contributed to their ability to be gender sensitive.

### **It's Not Men's Fault, Women have the Power**

Several participants' comments or expressions coalesced into a theme of rejection or denial of male privilege and sexism. These responses came in the form of rationalizing upon reflection, feeling victimized or oppressed themselves, or blaming women. Matt, for example, defended his biased reaction to the women in the *Vogue* pictures by stating, “I feel that the reason for this reaction is because some women dress to get a reaction from men and some dress for comfort. Nobody will ever convince me that wearing thong underwear is comfortable.” Matt seemed unaware of our patriarchal society's influence on how women dress for men's pleasure. He did not view response as victim blaming or rationalizing.

Lee noted an equity between the genders in that “men suffer from women's stereotypes just as much as women, maybe not just as much, but still detrimental.” He referenced rape and explained how this affects men,

...I think men suffer from that as well as women do, of this idea of women say no when they mean yes. It can be terrifying to be a man and go out because you're not – you're never sure, and you have to be so careful.

Matt furthered the notion that women mislead and victimize men, “don't ask for attention if you don't want it, don't get angry when you get attention,” indicating that the *real* victims are men. None of the participants articulated the existence or understanding of rape myth, and its potential impact on men and women. Participants' lack of awareness related to gender and power dynamics seemed to permeate this theme.

The potential for men to be victimized by women's power was reflected in Doug's statements, where he acknowledged being intimidated by beautiful women because they displayed confidence and power, which was uncomfortable for him.

Referring to the women in the *Vogue* pictures Doug noted if they were his female peers,

I would struggle with being intimidated by these women. I would see them as confident and powerful and would feel insecure in getting to know them initially. I would assume that they have it all together: a great career AND a lot of influence and power due to their beauty. Honestly, I would be jealous and perhaps a little bitter.... until I had established some kind of connection with them.

It could be construed as men saying, “How dare a woman be attractive, confident, and powerful; it makes us [men] feel uncomfortable and uncertain.” The sentiment that attractive women have *little* to complain about or should not be concerned with sexism was summarized by Rich's statement:

For an attractive woman to say, ‘It's not easy being attractive. I've had to work really hard to overcome that,’ I think a lot of us would be like, ‘Really?’ I mean there are greater curses, especially in our country, than being attractive.

These discourses seemed to discount the oppression and sexism experienced by women and to minimize the responsibility of men in general to acknowledge and address it as such.

### **Lack of Self-Awareness and Contradictions**

Considering the importance of gender in counseling and counseling relationships, participants appeared to lack sensitivity. The most pronounced example of absence of self-awareness was demonstrated by Matt's comments regarding his declaration of being bias-free. Matt repeatedly claimed he either had "...less bias towards women than a lot of men do" or astoundingly "no bias whatsoever." Matt claimed he was so non-biased he was not capable of producing answers to questions distinguishing or differentiating gender and gender roles. Although superficially this may sound laudable, if not rare, throughout the interview Matt continued to share his biased and judgmental beliefs related to women and gender without recognition of the nature of his commentary or its reflection of his lack of cultural awareness or competency. For example, the following series of quotations was excerpted from one of Matt's narratives to illustrate the rapid progression of his assertion of non-judgmental beliefs in contrast to the reality of overt judging (*italics added*):

*I would not judge* these girls as clients. I feel that they still need to sew [sow] their wild oats. As women in general, I would say these women *use their looks to get what they want*, so *I would not trust them* as peers or faculty.

These women seem to want to express themselves in a fashionable way. *I would not judge them* whether they were clients, peers or faculty. *They could smile a bit more*. Maybe *they are trying too hard*. Either way, *I would not judge these individuals*.

*I would not judge* these women whether they were clients, peers or faculty. The yellow dress in the upper left hand corner is a little too short, so I would not like to see a faculty member wearing that *because I might not take her serious*. At the same time, a person's personality can take them a long way. All of these women

in each picture may be very intelligent and their personalities could be great. *I probably would be very judgmental of the women in the first picture.*

A few of the women in the first picture wore bras and panties, the others were clothed in short dresses.

Then, ironically, in response to the fourth prompt (i.e., a week before the second interview), Matt admitted he may have had some bias, “I felt the prompt that I had to provide feedback about the pictures of women dressed differently *did bring out some bias in me.*” However, he dismissed his reply as a consequence of the women’s apparel.

Trey, on the other hand, addressed his lack of awareness directly. He spoke forthright about the likelihood of being potentially unaware of his gender biases:

It is interesting to consider how I perceive the opposite gender in this field. I realized I probably have not given this the attention it deserves. For me, I know that it is important to be aware of these perceptions and biases as they will inevitably play a role in my counseling career. Really, I think that what this [being involved in research] has done for me is brought it up enough that I have been urged to pay attention to my internal perceptions of women. Next step will be to begin challenging some of these perceptions that are based on faulty evidence and societal influences that may not have much truth to them.

Trey’s words and sentiments pay tribute to how through education and intentional process, one can begin to recognize privilege and acknowledge there is still room to grow in self-awareness.

### **You Can’t Trust Most Women**

Another theme of the participants’ words and experiences was their stated or inferred lack of trust or suspicion of women. Participants expressed these notions in a variety of ways, some subtle and others more overt. Bob, for example, while talking about his female peers, expressed a sense of bewilderment regarding how he and his female peers interacted and how those exchanges seemed to vary by female peers’ age.



He speculated that younger female peers may feel a “threat” from men because they might wonder “...is this guy talking to me because he wants to date me? Is he talking to me because I’m attractive compared to unattractive or these other things?” For Bob, he viewed the source, younger women’s reaction to him, only through the lens of sexual attractiveness and may not have considered alternate reasons for the nature of the interaction. Older women (i.e., less sexually attractive), on the other hand, did not seem to perceive him as a threat:

I would say older women for sure. Every single older woman I know in this program talks to me and gives me – and like wants to give hugs and all this and I’m not a big huggy person so that’s kind of – (pause)

John noted feeling as though female faculty were not open to hearing what male students had to say, especially when related to gender. He also talked about being “dinged” by female faculty for expressing gender stereotypical notions or potentially sexist remarks, thus John said “I learned to keep my mouth shut.” Other participants commented how female faculty were more sensitive to gender and cultural issues.

Nick, also acknowledge a distrust or skepticism of women’s “motives,” as witnessed in response to the picture of a woman in the short skirt. He stated:

Really, I would be skeptical. I'd be like, ‘She's’ – it's a kind of a turn off for me. If you think you're trying to flaunt something, which is fine. People can do what they want. But, it always lends an air to me of just they're trying to get something or get somewhere.

For Nick, seeing women dressed in a short skirt or in a sexy, fashionable way, as in the *Vogue* pictures, elicited a very personal response, “...my whole history of anger towards women and how they kind of can get their hooks into men...”

Nick noted:

In looking at the pictures from *Vogue*, if the women in the first photo-montage were clients, from knowing what I know of my transference/countertransference, I would be on guard and on the look-out for personality features of insecurity, narcissism and possible attachment disorders. Personally, I am hyperaware and on-guard around women who seemingly 'use' their sexuality in an overt way to express themselves. I tend to not trust someone like the women in picture one until I get to know them.

Matt lamented about women's deceptive messages to men; "It's like a mixed message. You're dressing like this but you don't want the attention. Which one is it? You know?" Matt talked about his negative artifact being the lyrics "Crazy Bitch" by Buck Cherry and how women dance to this provocative song and how that attracts negative attention of men. He declared it "represents women in such a negative way it makes me sick!" Bewildered, Matt contemplated how when the derogatory song "Crazy Bitch" is played in the bar the women "go crazy and dance to it," to him it feels like they have little respect for themselves. Matt expressed confusion and even annoyance that women complain about being oppressed then flaunt it in men's face by dancing to a derogatory song. The potentially unclear or questionable intentions of women seemed to perplex, confuse, and anger some of the participants. Participants and their comments appeared to support the notion that some men believe women's motives are always sexual in nature, that men can be and often are victims of women's sexuality, and that women intentionally prey upon men's vulnerabilities. This perception and distrust could serve as a barrier to open dialogue between and among women and men and stumbling block to expanding trust and respect.

### **Summary**

The participants in this research study contributed to the understanding of male counseling students' perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. Although some of the participants had greater self-awareness about their perceptions of females, the data

suggested that overall, gender, gender role stereotyping, sexism, and lookism do not seem to be ameliorated by counselor training. Further, for many participants, the intersection of diagnosis, counseling, education, and relationships are fraught with confusion and contradictions.

Gender was viewed by the participants to be an important and consistent variable present in counseling and relationships. Ironically, although it was acknowledged as a significant factor, attention and training regarding gender issues appears to be lacking. In terms of perceptions about or related to women, the participants expressed persistently stereotypic views about women as more emotional and relational and acknowledged that greater attention is placed on women and their appealing appearance. Participants also discussed their own struggles with patriarchy on men and rejected responsibility for patriarchy's oppression of women. Lastly, participants shared their confusion and cultural suspicion or mistrust of women and their motives.

This group of male, graduate counseling students unselfishly and sincerely participated in this research study and offered an indication of perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. The findings of their responses aid in the potential to advance gender understanding and facilitate deeper gender consciousness in counseling training programs, which could have far and wide implications on both women and men, clients, peers, and faculty.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

Overall, women seem to be placed in a double bind. If they are relational, talkative or dress sexy, they tended to fit the expectations of most of the participants and were perceived to be less intelligent, softer, and more attractive to participants. Participants indicated that they liked to look at “sexy” women more, yet they judged them harshly; if they dress too casual or sloppy, they seem less intelligent; if they are too attractive, they may be judged as “earning” any status or accolades because of their looks; or if they are too attractive, they may be held to a higher standard.

As I discuss these and the other findings of this research, a narrative analysis will be used to communicate and make meaning of the data collected through the voice of the participants and my constructivist stance. The data collected for this research project was distilled into nine themes: *Importance of Gender in Counseling, Gap in Gender Training, Men and Women are Different, Women, the Softer Half, Looks Matter, for Women, Patriarchy’s Oppression of Men, It’s Not Men’s Fault, Lack of Self-Awareness and Contradictions, and You Can’t Trust Most Women*. In this chapter, the nine themes are further rendered into three findings to simplify the discussion and organize the implications and the recommendations. Additionally, the relationships between and among the findings are articulated and the results are synthesized and compared to the professional literature, and implications and recommendations for counselor education are explored. I conclude the chapter with a section on the changes in myself and the

participants' during the research process. As referenced in Chapter III, a tenet of constructivism is the idea that the researcher and the participants are changed in some way by the research process (Najafi-Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005).

### **The Need for Training and Education**

The themes, *Importance of Gender in Counseling*, *Gap in Gender Training*, and *Lack of Self-Awareness and Contradictions* seem to fall under the broader finding of *Need for Training and Education*. The three themes noted under this finding, *Need for Training and Education*, and the supporting data in the results demonstrated the importance, need, and value of gender related training and education in counselor education and preparation. Participants overwhelmingly confirmed that gender played a significant role in counseling and their education as counselors. Participants identified and articulated a gap in their professional training related to gender and power issues, personal and professional awareness, and personal accountability. The current participants' sentiments reflected a 20 year old finding (Scher & Good, 1990), in which the importance of gender training for counselors in training were acknowledged along with concerns that training programs were not adequately addressing gender issues.

Consistent with what is expected of counselors' cultural competencies the domains of race and sexual orientation (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), it is critical that counselors are also aware of and accountable for their biases related to gender and gender role expectations. Authors have noted that counselors need to engage in self-reflective process to increase their awareness of these biases and remain open to exploring them in context to their work with clients (Seem & Johnson, 1998; Wester & Trepal, 2008). As noted previously, the focus on training or issues related to gender and

gender role expectations seemed to have receded into the background of counselor training. The counseling professions' move away from gender as a salient component of the human experience may be due, in part, to the ever expanding curriculum in and multiple foci of counselor training programs, a continued emphasis on the dimensions of race and or sexual orientation, or the vestiges of the *backlash* described by Faludi (1991) in response to the feminist movement. Whatever the origins of this inattention, counselors need to understand the role gender plays in their life and how difficult culturally competent counseling may be without a personal understanding and intentional reflection related to gender, gender roles, and gender expression (Scher & Good, 1990; Stevens-Smith, 1995; Wester & Trepal, 2008).

Counselors can benefit from considering and understanding the oppressive experiences of many females. As discussed by Hanna, Talley, and Guindon (2000), the exploratory model, an approach which awareness, empathy, and perception of the oppressed and the oppressor are highlighted, may be one avenue to accomplish this with counseling students. Utilizing this approach female and male students can learn from one another about their gender experiences in our patriarchal culture. An important aspect described by Hanna, et al. (2000) is for counselors to understand the nature of oppression, the experiences of the oppressed and oppressors, and how the politics of power creates and sustains oppression. It is critical for counselors to be exposed to and learn about the historical and current nature of oppression of women. Hays and Chang (2003) identified the significance of counselors-in-training to gain self-awareness in the area of white privilege, oppression and racial identity development. As these authors noted, current training does not adequately address these issues, and as a result, individuals in dominant

groups may unintentionally perpetuate the oppression of others. I would offer, given the results of my study, a need exists for gains in self-awareness related to gender issues on the part of many counseling students.

Participants recounted a number of experiences and perspectives related to their perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. Notably, issues of sexual tension, sexual power and perceived sexual intent were voiced by participants. Although all of these are noteworthy, an issue of particular concern is that of the sexual exploitation of clients (Scher & Good, 1990). Although therapist-client sex (TCS) is uncommon, the effects are detrimental and as a profession we should be vigilant to prevent any such infractions. TCS is an extreme example of sexual objectification and given that most TCS involves a male counselor or provider and a female client, discussions and personal reflections focused on the topics of gender, gender roles, heterosexism, patriarchy, and rape myth would form the foundation for understanding and action in the counseling profession. For example, Thoreson, Shaughnessy, Heppner, and Cook (1993) found that most perpetrators of sexual misconduct were either single or divorced. John, a participant, theorized during his interview that having a solid relationship may be insurance for not engaging in sex with a client. John also hypothesized that older, male therapists may be more likely to commit therapist-client sex because sex occurs infrequently or is nonexistent at home. It has been noted in the literature that middle-aged or older men are more likely to commit sexual boundary violations (Celenza, 2007; Garrett & Davis, 1998). Additionally, individuals who engaged in TCS are often mistakenly thought to be deviants (Celenza, 2007); yet, because most of the participants indicated that the topic of TCS was not part of their counselor training, students are

unlikely to realize that most TCS perpetrators were reputable professionals (Somer & Saadon, 1999). Uninformed counselors-in-training, like John, may continue to believe, out of ignorance of the facts or denial, that the counselor likely did not intend on committing a sexual offense; he was either single or experiencing trouble at home and succumbed to their desire after an intense bond was formed with the a seductive female client. Without education, this type of thinking allows professionals to avoid any type of accountability, personal growth, or self-examination.

To avoid any violations or potential TCS issues, one participant, Rich reported that his internship site has a rule that counselors can only see same sex clients. This rule seems like a drastic modification in counseling practices and sends messages that sexual inappropriateness occurs only between cross-gendered pairs (i.e., heterosexist bias), women maybe a threat to male counselors, or men cannot control themselves or learn to do so there must be a rule for all counselors. Basically, it appears women again may be expected to protect men from themselves. Ironically, in some studies homosexual practitioners were identified as having higher incidents of TCS (Garrett & Davis, 1998), so it appears that education regarding gender issues is relevant for students, internship site supervisors and most likely the counselor educators who train students and support internship placements.

We must seek to educate counselors and counselors-in-training on prevention and protective factors, related to boundary violations, like supervision (Plaut, 2008; Somer & Saadon, 1999), the role gender plays in interpersonal interactions, or knowing that victims of TCS are often survivors of child sexual abuse (Ben-Ari & Somer, 2004; Somer & Saadon, 1999). Being educated and having knowledge of certain risk factors related to



TCS is important so counselors can contextualize their personal behaviors and responses as well as those of clients. Somer and Saadon (1999) cautioned practitioners to be aware of becoming professionally isolated, aware of boundaries between oneself and their clients, and continuing to seek supervision. Thoreson, et al. (1993) discussed the importance of counselors' receiving training in the area of ethics in relation to sexual contact and involvement in professional relationships. Specifically, they noted that while sexual attraction may be inevitable, sexual acting out is not and should be addressed in training to support counselors in their important and intimate work with their clients. Thoreson, et al. (1993) suggested education and prevention as interventions of not only sexual contact between counselor and client but other complex issues such as power inequities and sex role stereotypes.

Considering the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of TCS are males, the issue of gender and power once again becomes a central aspect to be considered and addressed in counselor training and education. Several of the participants in the study reflected what McIntosh (1992) identified as male privilege. Male privilege, like white privilege, is unearned and without acknowledgement and awareness can further perpetuate oppression of women. I believe Matt's narrative was most reflective of this process, as he was neither aware of nor could he acknowledge the status he had gained simply by being male. The examination of power in relationships is an integral component of feminist therapy (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004); however, the role of gender (being male), privilege and power seems to permeate most of our relationships. Therefore, placing gender and self-examination as a focal point in counselor training and

education appears to be warranted (Hoffman, 1996; Scher & Good, 1990; Thoreson, et al., 1993).

### **Sex Bias and Sexism in Counseling**

The themes which support the second finding, *Sex Bias and Sexism in Counseling*, are *Men and Women are Different*, *Women, the Softer Half*, and *Looks Matter, for Women*. These themes and findings are consistent with researchers who found that counselors do hold gender bias (Seem & Clark, 2006) and gender bias towards women tends to be detrimental and based on their appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Participants' data included the following: differences between men and women- some biological, some environmental, women were seen as more emotional and relational, and women are negatively evaluated based on their appearance. This finding also supported the first finding, *Need for Training and Education*, as an avenue to identify and change pervasive and unhelpful attitudes (Pleasants, 2011; Seem & Clark, 2006). These included the pathologizing of expected yet stereotypic gender based behaviors, as well as attributing nefarious and sexualized motives to clothing and way of being. These gender biases exist and may impact counseling and the counseling relationship (Wester & Trepal, 2008). Numerous studies support the negative attribution placed upon women based on feminine traits, such as emotionality and relational orientation, and physical appearance (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007; Seem & Clark, 2006; Umberson & Hughes, 1987). These attributions often coalesce into perceived female pathology as discussed by participants, low self-esteem, body image issues and eating disorders, for girls and women in our culture or result in violence toward or sexual assault of women (Choate, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for counselors to understand the

systemic and pervasive nature of gender bias and sexism of women, and particularly males' role in the complex dynamics.

Consistent with other research, the participants in this study acknowledged women are often objectified and judged based upon their looks. As noted in the previous chapter, consistent with prior research, the participants saw women as more emotional and more relational (Wester & Trepal, 2008). Females were described as “soft”, which may be interpreted as fragile, as it was thought that females have difficulty with tolerating direct communication. Participants described females in pathological ways, from insecure to using their sexuality. This too echoes what has already been posited:

...women in counseling historically have experienced a double bind; if they conform to gender-role expectations, they were viewed as unhealthy or passive, but if they acted in ways that were discrepant from their expected roles, they were also viewed negatively. (Choate, 2008, p.1)

Participants saw faculty as less academic than their male counterparts and female faculty had additional expectations to be warm and not particularly attractive or sexual. Men, in general, it was hypothesized, were listened to more because they are more succinct when they speak and their voice is louder and deeper which catches one's attention. The sentiments of the participants supported the notion of how gender and power can negatively affect women in academia (Bennett, 1982; Denker, 2009). Once again, women were branded as softer, more emotional, more concerned with relationships, and more verbal (but less heard) than men.

Knowing the costs of sexism for girls and women, it is alarming that we continue to understate the importance of keeping the impact of gender on women at the forefront when working toward cultural competence in counselor training and education.

McAuliffe (2008) highlighted the necessity for culturally alert counseling, including

gender, noting the ethical responsibility and professional self-interest. As outlined in the multicultural competencies (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992), this includes awareness, knowledge, and skill. If the effects of gender bias in counseling continue to be ignored or downplayed, sexism is likely to continue in counseling. With the professions call to cultural competency and social justice, to moderate the significance of gender seems a tragic oversight.

### **Men's Response to Sexism**

The final finding, *Men's Response to Sexism*, incorporated the following themes: *Patriarchy's Oppression of Men, It's Not Men's Fault, and You Can't Trust Most Women*. This encompassing finding, *Men's Response to Sexism*, is an important element in investigating and understanding men's perception of sexism and how they believe they are impacted by it (Gilbert & Rader, 2001; Pleasants, 2011). It is valuable to have open and respectful dialogue about gender, oppression and power to gain greater insight about how men see their role and responsibility, if any, in sexism (Gilbert & Rader, 2001; Pleasants, 2011). Gilbert and Rader (2001) discussed this challenge in the framework of dominant discourses, and Liu (2005) dominant masculinity. These scholars called attention to the necessary step of groups in power (men) needing to examine and willingly acknowledge their position of power and privilege. When men ignore or downplay their gender privilege, like race, oppression may be unintentionally perpetuated (Gilbert & Rader, 2001; Liu, 2005). Without this scrutiny, it may be difficult for some men and some women, to consider the impact of gender and power and analyze these phenomena in an honest and vulnerable way, as was born out in several participants' responses. Specifically, several participants' expressed their own oppression as a result

of patriarchy, showed defensiveness in regards to responsibility for sexism, and gave examples of women being castigated as the instigators of oppression towards men. These expressions seem to reinforce the “backlash” reaction Faludi (1991) discussed as a resistance and objection to the Women’s Movement and Feminism. The privilege and power held by the participants (i.e., white males) may contribute to their projection and lack of accountability for their sexist views (McIntosh, 1992).

These themes and this finding also support the need for training and education. A very intentional and respectful training is called for to allow for dialogue among and within genders to openly and honestly discuss and experience gender and power analysis. Also mentioned under this finding was how participants expressed frustration with female faculty for feeling silenced or shut-down, or possibly needing to tread lightly with sensitive female faculty.

The themes and findings are interrelated to a culture of sexism and gender role stereotyping. This is consistent with what Seem and Clark (2006) noted, “Our findings suggest that the gender role stereotypes used by counselors-in-training appear not to have changed much since the early 1970’s” (p. 256), which results in an unfavorable bias towards women. Participants’, in the present study (a) pathologized female clients’ behavior based on her manner of dress, (b) viewed their female peers as less competent when they were perceived to dress more fashionably, and (c) diminished the role of power and gender, particularly for women in the role of academia (Denker, 2009). Although each theme appears to have its own complexities and unique contributors, the foundation of sexism seems to remain at the core of the findings.

### **Changes in Self and Participants' Changes During the Research Process**

The findings of this study continue to be explored throughout the narrative of this chapter and applied in context of the discussion. What follows is a discussion about the changes in the researcher and participants as a response to the research process. A tenet of constructivism is the belief that both the researcher and the participant were transformed some way by the research process (Najafi-Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005). As indicated previously, in addition to a constructivist stance, this research has been framed also by a feminist view. Therefore, these changes or shifts in me and the participants were explained through a feminist lens. The importance of reflexivity and the analysis of gender and power were noted, which was also key to counselors recognizing and understanding their own biases (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). I believe the participants and I were changed by engaging in this intentional process of examining perceptions of gender, and this experience is an example of how reflexivity and engagement are helpful (Pleasant, 2011). I was changed in many ways by this experience. I will expound on some of the ways in which I grew and was challenged during this period of time.

As a researcher taking a constructivist stance, I spent time with each participant, listened to his story and his experiences, and then pored over his transcripts and journal prompt responses. I felt I began to understand each man's perspectives and responses based on his experiences. I experienced a more open and flexible point of view on the topic of gender than I had expected to, based on my prior experience and what I had come to understand from my research. I approached this research topic because of my personal experiences with, what I interpreted as, gender biased male counselors. I do

believe gender biases exist in our culture and all of the participants expressed either being aware of gender stereotypes or holding gender biases. As I disclosed previously, I did expect the participants to hold gender biases, but it was interesting to me that from a constructivist framework I was able to understand the participant in context of their experience (Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005). It was apparent to me on numerous points that some of the participants held sexist beliefs or lacked personal awareness (as noted in the first and second finding), but based on their histories and their experiences, it often made sense to me how they arrived at their beliefs or attitudes. For example, in Nick's second prompt he said:

I would be on guard and on the look-out for personality features of insecurity, narcissism and possible attachment disorders. Personally, I am hyperaware and on-guard around women who seemingly 'use' their sexuality in an overt way to express themselves. I tend to not trust someone like the women in picture one until I get to know them.

From Nick's first interview, I learned about his experience with his mother and how hurt he was by her abandoning his family. Within this context of knowing about Nick's lived experience, I could appreciate his response more. Attempting to understand the participants' experiences and understanding of gender (taking a constructivist stance) and comparing and contrasting their narratives alongside the literature and the cultural context was challenging (Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005) and for me it was both appreciative and unsettling at times.

In fact, what follows is a discussion about this very blindness I am referring to toward my own appearance and self objectification. During this period of time, as I analyzed and combed over my data, I simultaneously taught a graduate course on Gender and Sexuality. This gave me even more time to ponder and confront my own beliefs and

attitudes surrounding gender and sexism. Over time, I realized and came to understand how society and culture impacts each one of us, and I am no exception. Through showing the film *Killing Us Softly* and reading more about Jean Kilbourne's work on the impact of media on women, it is impossible to ignore how I have been shaped by this phenomenon. I, like so many women, was taught to care about my appearance and my attire to the point of obligation and disease. I have friends who went to extremes of having plastic surgery, breast enhancement surgery, or using cocaine regularly to maintain thinness. For me, most of my friends and sisters, we continue to uphold less severe compulsions, including shaving our legs, almost daily, spending ridiculous amounts of money on our hair and clothes painfully plucking our eyebrows, and wearing shoes that are cute but not very comfortable, at least for special occasions.

Part of this desire and interest in fashion, make-up, and hair color is based on much more than purely sexism and self-objectification, or at least on the surface it seems that way. For example, I have four older sisters. There are many things I learned from them and my mom, while growing up; some of those things are related to gender and being a woman. Granted, each of them were impacted too by sexism, so one could argue that at the root of their influence was culturally imposed sexism by male patriarchy. But to me, it seems deeper than that; it is about meaning and belonging, and some of the things I do or do to myself could be seen as self-objectifying and may well be, but I may be partaking or doing them based on identifying with or relating to one of the significant female figures in my life. This phenomenon makes it all the more confusing and convoluted. I wanted to belong; I wanted to be one of the girls. Examples of the behaviors that come to mind, although there are many from which to choose, include



tanning and wearing panty hose. My sisters and I would spend quality, special time lying out in the sun together. We would lay on lawn chairs in our yard on the farm or on a sandy beach at one of the thousands of Minnesota lakes. It was a time of bonding and camaraderie, yet all the time something we were doing to “improve” our appearance, not to mention potentially damaging our skin and health. As Brown Travis and Meginnis-Payne (2001) summarized:

Emulating cultural standards of beauty is often a way for women to display gender and establish a sense of identity and self. This display often requires an ongoing participation in the beauty culture where clothes shopping, experimenting with cosmetics, tanning, sharing diet tips, and participating in exercise focused on weight-loss are considered ‘recreational activities.’ (Beauty Politics and Patriarchy: The Impact on Women's Lives, IV. Patriarchal Connections, B. para. 3)

Second, as I was growing up, wearing panty hose was a sign of being mature and feminine. I could not wait until I reached the age and point in my development when it would be deemed appropriate to wear panty hose. It made me feel feminine, special, pretty, grown-up, and most importantly, that I had reached a point where I was now a part of the womanly group of which my sisters and mom were already a part. “Feminist perspectives on attractiveness standards and stereotypes contend that beauty is not an independent, external, and objective quality, but is entangled with power, gender, and sexuality” (Brown Travis & Meginnis-Payne, 2001, Beauty Politics and Patriarchy: The Impact on Women's Lives, V. Conclusions, C. para. 3). Although my experiences have been meaningful to me, I now realize that I was a pawn in the patriarchal establishment.

All of this cumulates into is both an expansion of my understanding of potential reasons or sources of self-objectifying behaviors (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and an admission of my own contribution to benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). As I have described other observations, I see this also as a continuum or spectrum. There are

self-objectifying (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and sexist behaviors which are extremely detrimental and harmful (Hostile Sexism), and there are others that are subtle and hard to distinguish from other sources of origin (Benevolent Sexism). Hostile and benevolent sexism are mechanisms which support gender inequality and oppression of women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Ambivalent sexism, which encompasses both Benevolent and Hostile Sexism are integral factors which are expressed between women and men (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The participants' responses to their perceptions of women in this study, like my own experience shared above, demonstrates how fundamental these constructs are in our lives, and an actual demonstration of the effects of how education and training do affect change and increase self-awareness of gender issues and concerns.

### **Participants' Changes During the Research Process**

In this section, the intrapersonal changes reported by participants during the research process are considered. Before the changes in the participants are discussed, the participants' degree of self-awareness is addressed. Like the participants responses in general, there were some commonly shared experiences and others that were more unique. An interesting part of the participants' experiences seem to be their degree of gender sensitivity and self-awareness. Knowledge of one's self in regards to gender is critical to counseling "Counselors need to be acutely aware of how their own gender socialization and beliefs affect what they consider to be 'appropriate' behavior for others..." (Wester & Trepal, 2008, p. 444), and unfortunately, "...many counselors are unaware of the role that gender play in their lives (p. 444).

As I engaged with the participants and became entrenched in their data I was struck by the degree of variance of their sensitivity and self awareness. Matt, for

example, adamantly expresses his lack of gender bias and sexism, yet he expressed some of the most sexist views and opinions. His lack of awareness of denial of his sexist attitudes I found as the most alarming even more alarming than his expression of sexism. Conversely, Pedro, especially, and Jackson, too, were surprisingly gender neutral and gender perceptive. Their humble and reflexive stance was striking and remarkable. These participants may be viewed as profeminist, as they recognized and were called to act on gender inequalities (Pleasant, 2011).

How does one reconcile the wide range of perceptions and degree of self-awareness of the participants? A recent article by Roets, Van Hiel, and Dhont (2011) suggested sexism may be not only a gender issue but an individual cognitive and attitude issue. The authors put forward the notion that rather than an isolated gender issue, an individual who possess a sexist view may be rooted in their social attitude or cognitive style. This is an interesting and possible additive explanation for one's beliefs and attitudes. However, it seems difficult to ferret out the androcentric and patriarchal undertones which permeate our cultural and existence (Basow, 2001). Whether or not Roets, Van Hiel, and Dhont's (2011) hypothesis is considered a valid possibility, the implications are the same: increased gender sensitivity training with concentration of increased self-awareness and confronting barriers of mistrust related to gender issues.

Participants' responses to the research process, including their artifacts, demonstrate the importance of the reflexive process and the benefits of intentional focus on gender analysis. In the fourth journal prompt, the participants were asked to "please complete a summary statement regarding what it has been like for you being involved in this research project;" their statements were overwhelmingly positive in nature. The

responses contribute to my recommendations in the Implication and Future Research section later in this chapter. Participants' responses and reflections on their involvement in this research provided insights and ideas on how important dialogue about gender and gender issues is to the field of counseling and training of counselors. Of particular consequence is how the participants reported this opportunity as meaningful and expansive in terms of self-awareness or their desire for greater self-exploration in relation to gender concerns. These responses were a result of the participants responding to a request for reflection on their participation in this study, thus it contributes to the discussion of how they have been changed by this process.

Participants' statements about participating in the research process were affirming, and ranged from simple to complex. Their comments were consistent with Rich's statement, "I've had fun doing it," but more importantly, participants said the research process caused them to think, rethink, and reflect on gender. Doug shared his appreciation for open dialogue between genders about gender issues; I would add discourse within genders is equally as important. Jackson said he wants to continue to expand his awareness of gender issues, and Pedro said being a participant piqued his interest in the topic of gender. Thus, these participants were actively engaged in internalizing personal responsibility in addressing sexism, as Pleasants (2011) noted and demonstrated the next step of deeper reflection and desire to understand their role in the dominant discourse (Gilbert & Rader, 2001; Liu, 2005).

Several participants spoke directly about their awareness; Lee does not believe he has many stereotypes about women but conceded that he may be less aware than he realizes. Sentiments expressed by some of the participants mirror similar obstacles

encountered when confronting racism and other biases by those who are in the dominant group (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Nick, who expressed having some intensely negative feelings about women, said this helped him to be cognizant of his feelings about gender. In addition to increased gender awareness in general, a couple of participants indicated how this awareness impacts counseling specifically. Rich offered that gender is one important element to be aware of about a client and he further expounded on the importance of being respectful of gender and gender differences. Doug considered how his gender awareness had increased and he became more aware of his gender in the therapeutic relationship and with his peers. These participants' sentiments cannot be undervalued, and are consistent with Wester's and Trepal's (2008) notion that "Every client who comes in for counseling is a gendered being..." Further these authors stated, "...it is imperative that counselors be aware of the impact of their gendered selves, as well as the impact that clients, as gendered beings, have on the counseling process" (Wester & Trepal, 2008, p. 455).

A final area of response to the research process that needs to be touched upon is the participants' intriguing response to some of their reactions. Trey considered some of his responses to the first interview questions as absurd but then wondered if they were potentially more truthful. Guilt and embarrassment are what Jackson expressed following the first interview, upon further reflection he wondered if his beliefs were irrational and concluded that he would likely benefit from further exploration and understanding of gender issues. Curiously, Lee conveyed that his thoughts and feelings did not always match; he questioned if some of his answers may be different from his reaction in real life. He also stipulated that some of his answers may have seemed

judgmental toward women, but it may not be so. These examples of cognitive dissonance are to be expected when individuals from the advantaged group begin to explore and consider their ethnocentrism (Case, 2007; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

For Trey, his awareness of women, in particular, how looking at women affects him, permeated his reaction. His thoughtful approach to this included not only heightened awareness to the frequency in which he gazed at women, but the potential consequences; does this impact how he thinks about women, does he treat attractive women differently, does he not take them as seriously, does looking at women sexually contribute to objectification, is it healthy, when is it unhealthy to look at women, etc.? From this internal dialogue, Trey concluded that it is important for him to continue to wrestle with his awareness of sexual attraction and challenge his perceptions and biases, and how this may potentially come to play with female clients. These participants' responses demonstrate Pleasants' (2011) notion regarding how men changed in their views of sexism when they are consciously, personally, and actively involved in reflecting on gender and power analysis. Clearly, these participants and possibly male counselors in training could benefit from this approach to dialog and analysis. Changes experienced and expressed by participants – movement in awareness, regret or questioning prior statements and recognition of male privilege showed advancement toward cultural competencies in the area of gender (Sue et al., 1992).

Aside from the above introspective replies, Doug talked about how difficult and uncomfortable it was for him to respond to the prompts in isolation. For him, and I imagine for others, it was important for him to dialogue with others to better understand himself and himself in relation to others in regards to his view on gender. As Freire

discussed in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), it was important to dialogue and be in relationship with others for a person to begin to understand and confront their own biases and begin to take responsibility for them. The public nature of the discourse speaks to the importance of continuing to seek ways to engage counseling graduate students in conversation and reflection about gender topics and the value of offering these opportunities in classes and as a core part of counselor training and education.

### **Integrated Narrative**

I offer you, the reader, a composite view of a fictional participant, Truman. Although Truman is illusory, his story resonates and is representative of an integration and synthesis of participants' experiences.

Truman comes to counseling as a field of study because he is interested in relationships and human interaction. He has experienced some personal scorn from his family, friends, and society while growing up because he did not fit the typical masculine stereotype. Truman was more "feminine" than some of his male friends and peers. He was interested in sports, played some, but also felt drawn to the arts. He thrived in theatre; he enjoyed being a part of the creative, expressive arts. Now on his career path, Truman desired a graduate degree in counseling to further his work in the helping field and as a way to make meaning in his life.

As a white male, Truman was surprised, and sometimes offended, in his graduate classes when the conversations turned to oppression, race, and gender. Truman often left class thinking, "I feel like I'm to blame, I'm not to blame, I didn't hurt so and so, I didn't ask for any privilege."

Truman, like his friends, dated various women, until he met his partner, Eve. Over the last couple of years, they have settled into a stable, comfortable relationship. However, during these graduate school discussions about gender he thinks back to high school and his undergraduate years of dating and thinks about his own experiences and those of his buddies, and often wonders “Really?! Who is the oppressed?! Who is the oppressor?!” He can recall times when he and his friends would go to bars to meet nice young women, and these young women would flirt with him and his buddies. His friends and he would be feeling pretty good, enjoying talking to the “girls”, buying them drinks, and feeling like they were moving in the “right” direction. After he and his friends had bought the young women a few drinks, they would disappear or start talking to other guys. Truman and his friends felt used by these young ladies. Truman and his friends grew up in the 80’s and 90’s. They often enjoyed listening to music, lyrics that talked about sex, women, and how women wanted them (men) to give them sex. Truman and his friends watched television shows and movies where they saw men become successful by making money, “getting” the pretty girls, and driving shiny, fast cars.

Based on these experiences, Truman is often confused and frustrated with the class discussions. How can women possible feel victimized? Sure, women are raped by men, women do suffer domestic violence frequently by the hands of their boyfriends or husbands, but Truman and his friends have not, nor would they ever do these things to women. Having been born and raised in the post feminist movement, Truman rarely, if ever, is faced with the historical context of women being treated as property, or being denied the right to vote. Therefore, the plight of women seemed far off or at quite a



distance from him and made it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile what some of his female classmates and faculty were saying about gender and sexism.

Fortunately, for Truman this discomfort was limited, as these tense and awkward discussions only lasted a couple of classes and then the topic moved on to another multicultural or sexuality topic not directly related to gender. Truman was quite relieved to leave the topic of gender, but he could not help but continue to reflect on how he has and continues to interact with women. He has noticed since those class conversations that women are sexualized on television, in movies, and in lyrics. Truman finds himself talking more to his wife, Eve, about her thoughts about gender and whether or not she has ever experienced or felt sexualized.

These experiences and being in this field of study have caused Truman to pause and seriously consider his experiences as a male and the experiences of females, including his female clients, peers, and faculty. He finds himself reflecting on and asking himself, “How does my gender impact my life, my relationships, and my interactions? Is it possible that I am unaware of how my gender plays a part of my life because it is just who and what I am? Is it possible that being a male, a white male, I have had the privilege of never having to really think about gender and how it may impact my life and my actions?” For the first time, Truman is aware of his maleness, his gender, in relation to others, and he begins to “see” things he has never seen before. Truman begins to look at himself and others in the context of our gendered society and realizes that women and men are impacted more than he knew and devotes himself to learning more about this phenomena and how he can become an active participant in increasing his own self-

awareness about gender and how he can take action personally and professionally to be an advocate for greater gender equity.

Truman could have gone a different direction with his thoughts, feelings, and intentions after becoming uncomfortable with the gender discussions in his class. Let us take a look at that possible scenario. Truman was relieved when the professor quit bringing up gender and how women have been oppressed, and how women are seen as sexual objects. "Please," Truman thought, all of the women he knew were more oppressive to themselves and other women than he ever was or any of his friends ever were to women. "Who's kidding who, here?!" Truman thought in those class discussions. Some of the women in his graduate class would jump on the "oppressed" bandwagon, but really, he knew who was the oppressed. He and his friends always had to buy the drinks for their dates, and often for nothing, if you know what I mean. But, that was then and this is now; Truman is older now and in a serious relationship with his girlfriend, Eve. He has chosen the field of counseling because he is open to new ideas and wants to understand people better and in relationship to others. With that in mind, Truman reflects for a short time on the class discussion on gender, "I guess it is possible that women are seen as sex objects, and as such suffer certain ramifications. After all, I did read about the statistics on sexual violence, rape, and domestic violence. It still seems confusing and not quite as clear-cut as those feminists want it to seem. I know I respect women, I take care of my girlfriend, and she takes care of me. I have a great deal of respect for women, my mom, and my sisters. I don't think all of this talk about gender really applies to me. I'm pretty aware of my gender and my sexuality; maybe, some of the other guys in my program are more sexist and could benefit from the dialogue and

readings. Now that I'm beginning to see clients, I really don't think gender will be much of an issue. I am seeing a variety of clients, some young, pretty women, but that doesn't really affect me. I talk to my supervisor, who is a male, and we just joke about some of the women who are really hot and sexy and then the tension seems to dissipate. I'm happy with Eve; maybe unattached or older guys need to worry about crossing boundaries, but I'm not really worried about that."

In this fictional portrayal of a male counseling student, two scenarios were presented of how the student interacts with the topic of gender in his graduate studies. In the first scenario, Truman is truly changed by his experience of coming in contact with his own expansion of gender awareness. He will continue to explore and challenge himself, and allow himself to be challenged by his environment, seeking to understand more about gender and its affects. In the second scenario Truman does not allow, is not ready, or is unable to internalize the gender discussions, and instead, he rejects the possibility of exploring gender and its impact on himself and those around him. As a response, he continues to externalize the issue of gender, denying he has a role, but seeing other's role, and minimizing the role of women in the equation. The participants in this study can be broadly seen in and within these two accounts of Truman; however, each participant was uniquely himself in the context of his own experiences and environment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In terms of limitation to this study, the following elements are noteworthy. All participants identified as white or Caucasian. This needs to be considered when looking at their perceptions of gender, to keep in mind they are speaking from the dominant

culture in terms of race. Another factor was the two auditors were female, resulting in an all female, review of the data. As pointed out previously, discrepancies between the researcher and auditors existed and helped to provide greater clarity in my interpretations and biases.

Lastly, a limitation is simply being unable to fully understand one's story or narrative. I made a valiant attempt to really listen to the participants and understand their perspective based on their words and ways of seeing. However, I recognize because of my constructivist stance that I did not and could not completely understand or articulate their perceptions with purity.

### **Implications for Counselor Education and Future Research**

The most salient implications for the field and areas of future research are gender training for counselors, including concentration on self-awareness and the barrier of mistrust. Given the historical and cultural sexual objectification and sexism of women, it is highly unlikely that male counselors did not possess some bias toward women, as I found my participants did. It is important, therefore, to learn what male (and female) counselors' perceptions are, to gain a greater understanding of those perceptions, and to then look for ways to bridge gaps in gender understanding in training. To not attend to the issue of gender-related issues and the gaps in education and training of counselors would be irresponsible. Particularly knowing, as the findings suggested, that sex bias and sexism in counseling exists and harms women in general, clients specifically, and perpetuates damaging gender stereotypes that are unhelpful to men and women.

Counselor educators may benefit from reviewing the work of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2007). The

review detailed how in the United States girls are exposed to implicit and explicit sexualized messages from parents, role models, peers and the media. The report suggested that the effects of sexualization are harmful and negatively impact girls in a number of ways. Recommendations included the need for further research, professional's efforts to work to raise awareness of sexualization, education and training, public policy and advocacy efforts, and finally public awareness. These recommendations could be easily applied to graduate counselor education and training programs. More work needs to be done in the area of research based training practices; developing curriculum and effective training using the research of individuals like Pleasants (2011) or organizations like the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2007) would be an appropriate next step for the field of counseling. Needed are operationalized, practical, and effective applications that can be utilized in counselor education and training. This resource and others like it can be utilized to inform educators and students on ideas for action and future areas of development.

Related to the finding, Men's Response to Sexism, counselors need to employ greater research into existing gender-related education and training to discover more about its adequacy and effectiveness. We need to do more research, particularly qualitative research, with counselors-in-training (CITs), female and male, to further understand their perceptions, reactions, and development surrounding gender issues and concerns. The same type of research needs to be conducted with faculty to understand their knowledge and skills in teaching and training in regards to gender-related issues, and their ability to facilitate learning environments conducive to supporting growth and development in CIT's. Qualitative research methods and longitudinal studies might be

particularly helpful and important to these gender-related investigations. As posited by Ponterotto (2005), and this study demonstrated, qualitative research and engagement with participants may in itself begin to produce change and increased awareness. With longitudinal studies, we may be able to observe developmental characteristics and growth in CITs, which could inform education and training and circumstances that either contribute to or take away from an individuals' ability to internalize gender sensitivity and awareness.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study support the recommendation to recognize the importance and the need for intentional focus on gender issues in counselor education and training. The CACREP (2001, 2009) accreditation standards, ACA Code of Ethics (ACA, 2005), and the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) Code of Ethics also support the requirement and necessity of attending to gender, along with other diversity issues (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004).

The common denominators present in the three findings discussed are the need for education and training to address gender issues, biases and sensitivity and the importance of self-awareness regarding the same. This study provides additional support for the importance and increased emphasis on gender issues for counselors in training because gender is a key element in counseling relationships. The participants spoke to the gap in gender training, and the literature also supports this deficiency (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004).

Counseling is a female saturated field, "The majority of clients who seek counseling services are women..." (Choate, 2008, p. 1). All but one participant reported

having over fifty percent of female clients; all participants said over eighty percent of their peers were female; and, most reported having been taught and trained by over seventy-five percent or more female faculty. Thus, one could argue the importance of understanding gender, and in particular females, "...yet most counselor education and other mental health preparation programs traditionally have paid little attention to the unique counseling issues of girls and women" (Choate, 2008, p. 1).

### **Education and Training**

Unfortunately, finding ways to provide adequate and appropriate gender training is not clear-cut. Even if the importance is recognized and the mandates of standards and ethical codes are honored, education and training related to gender issues remains elusive (Myers, Borders, Kress, & Shoffner, 2005). Two critical areas of gender education are content and process.

In 2004, Atkinson and Hackett said this about educating counselors about gender and other diverse populations:

Until counselor training and counseling research practices are brought in line with professional ethical and accreditation standards, direct services to diverse clients are likely to fall short of ideal practices. The suggestions offered here for changes in counselor training and counseling research should be viewed as a beginning point; at this point in the development of counseling as a profession we have yet to determine the most effective ways of teaching and researching client diversity. (p. 450)

It is recommended that training about diverse groups (i.e. gender) be both integrative and specific (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). Meaning, issues such as gender sensitivity should be infused in all counseling courses and a specific course or training should be done on gender alone.

In teaching gender-related issues, curriculum, models, and frameworks need to be considered. Worell and Remer (2003) noted that in curricula, gender has been included but insufficiently. Therefore, it is critical for programs to have, as Atkinson and Hackett (2004) suggested, a master plan, in which gender-related knowledge, experiences, and content are identified and relevant to courses being offered. Content and process need to be considered in gender-related education and training. In keeping with the CACREP (2001, 2009) standards experiential exercises should be incorporated to support the development and growth of self and other-awareness. Atkinson and Hackett (2004) suggested an outline of knowledge and experiences for use in counselor education and training for minority groups. For women, the training included three foci based on (a) counselor attitudes, values, and biases (including sexism and feminism), (b) gender neutral models of mental health, psychology, and social conditions, and (c) counseling and advocacy techniques focused on social change and feminist theories. This outline provides a wide range and thorough coverage of women's issues. A model like this could have an impact on students, on Matt for example, his stereotypic beliefs that he held no biases would be challenged.

As discussed previously, the topic of TCS should not be ignored in counselor training and education, and in fact should be intentionally addressed. Knowing about vulnerabilities, signs and symptoms of boundary violations, such as TCS, are critical components of counselor preparation (Celenza, 2007). Sexuality and attraction are very human responses, which is further complicated by society's gender and sexuality messages. Sexual feelings and tension can surface in the intimate counseling



relationship, and counselors-in-training should be given the opportunity to learn, reflect, and discuss how they can manage their sexuality in a professional and thoughtful way.

A vital aspect of this training is the intentional use of self-reflection as a means to increase self-awareness (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). The importance of self awareness related to gender issues and counselors have been previously suggested, "...course work needs to be focused explicitly on bringing this issue into conscious awareness" (Seem & Clark, 2006, p. 257), which was desired and called for by many participants in the current study. It was through conscious awareness that participants expressed confusion and empathy for the gender role stereotypes they foisted up clients, peers, and faculty. Students also need to understand how sexism and bias affect women depending on their status (i.e. faculty), their appearance, their behaviors, as demonstrated by the participants' responses to the expectations of females depending on whether they were a client, peer, or faculty. Comstock noted the importance of CITs examining their gender biases to better serve clients, and how the literature has neglected to address how this should be undertaken. From the research and standards, it is critical for students to experience and internalize gender-related learning to aid them in facing their own biases (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004).

### **Professional Development and Accountability of Faculty**

The role of the instructor is important (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004), and a supportive instructor who is able to create a safe, open, and trusting environment is key (Cintron, 2011). Faculty need to be role models of gender sensitivity and awareness. It is crucial that faculty members are adequately trained in gender-related topics, gender sensitive

education and training processes, and continue to reflect on and address their own biases (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004).

There are numerous elements to consider related to counseling pedagogy and practice. Certainly, reducing the polarization and inaccuracy related to the term feminism and promotion of a socially just dialog would be a start. Like the label, feminists, the topic of gender needs to be defused for individuals to hear the voice of those with less privilege and become aware of their privilege and be willing to take responsible for one's role in the distribution of power in society. As mentioned in Chapter III, ideas have been put forth to assist in these endeavors: GAT (Good, Gilbert, & Scher, 1990) offers counselors a manner of counseling which includes attention to knowledge, skills and attitudes related to gender principles; Hoffman (1996) applied GAT to counselor education as a method of applying the GAT tenets to counselor education and the Relational Model of Gender Awareness Development (Comstock et al., 2003) to facilitate gender awareness and sensitivity in counseling students. Also, Pleasants (2011) offered practical and potentially effective teaching strategies for counselor educators to consider. They included: encouraging conscious, personal and active investment in feminism, a reflexive and reflective approach to students own personal and systemic involvement and resistance to feminist concerns, an interdependent process versus an independent or dependent mode, a focus on the difference and understanding of intention versus consequences, and finally, an active, practical approach to connect students to their communities. This last suggestion demonstrates the importance of some type of service learning or experiential component. Like Jackson mentioned in his first interview, he

began volunteering at a domestic violence shelter. This type of learning assists individuals to internalize and integrate their experience.

Pleasant (2011) postulated that perhaps resistance may be more productive than disengagement. An important element to consider in education and training related to gender analysis and issues, is how training is conducted and effective factors in facilitating learning on topics such as gender or feminism. Although Pleasants (2011) does not specifically identify ways to do the training or specifically facilitate learning, he did touch upon, as just mentioned, key factors which increase the success and likelihood of being open to learning about feminism.

Pleasants (2011) investigated how male students respond to learning feminism. In his work, Pleasant categorized male resistance to feminism. The foundation of the resistance, he surmised, was based on men's conscious or unconscious desire to reinforce male privilege, despite their stated willingness to learn and be open to feminism. Some of the themes Pleasants (2011) identified, I also encountered in my participants, (e.g., defensiveness, turning attention away from feminism to self, seeing themselves as victims, and distinguishing themselves from other men). Pleasant's (2011) provided insight and affirmation to findings in the present study. Pleasants (2011) also made recommendations on how to approach feminism to reduce resistance and encourage greater reception, which may be useful in counselor education.

With the methods identified for infusing gender in counselor development, the critical need for gender awareness and sensitivity in counselor training and education seems apparent and supports what so many authorities in counselor education have already suggested (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; Comstock et al., 2003; Good, Gilbert, &

Scher, 1990; Hoffman, 1996; Myers et al., 2005; Seem & Clark, 2006). It is critical to have a learning environment, including a facilitator, which fosters receptivity, measured risk taking, and introspection, yet is practical and provides opportunities for students to be active and involved in change. This environment is one where resistance is identified and worked with in a productive way rather than in a way which leads to disengagement. This supportive environment is directly opposed to one which produces defensiveness, blame, and shame. Participants must be invited to share openly and a facilitator must be willing and able to promote an atmosphere of trust and respect for all individuals. To achieve this type of setting and maintain it, facilitators must not only have the knowledge and skills, they must also possess certain characteristics and development themselves to encourage change and growth in students or participants versus defensiveness and fear.

Several participants mentioned off-putting events they have had with female faculty persons, particularly in relation to when it came down to gender issues. Perhaps this means that faculty, as well as students, benefit from engaging in reflective practice related to gender issues and counselor training. For example, John's reported, "...since it's a primarily female dominated faculty - I'll tell you that over the three and a half years, I've learned to keep my mouth shut and sort of sit on my hands, and be like, 'You don't want to hear what I have to say.' And that's fine. I mean it's not fine, but it's just." In this scenario, John clearly was silenced related to a dialog related to gender. It is imperative that opinions and individual experiences are respected and that open dialogue is encouraged rather than stifled. This not only supports a constructivist framework but cultivates an environment of mutual respect and systemic change.

A grave concern is the barrier which potentially exists between males and females in the way of distrust. This is an important element for faculty to be cognizant of and prepared to respond in a useful manner in the education and training environment. Repeatedly, participants reported being skeptical or suspicious of women and their motives. Schwartz and Rutter (2000) talked about some men's reactions to feminism and women's expanded flexibility and roles with anger and confusion. These authors identified the sexual confusion experience over a decade ago, that seems eerily present in the United States, "...we have a volatile mix of opportunity, mixed signals, uneasy and often angry relations between the sexes, and changing gender scripts that leave men and women unsure about how to present themselves and how to interpret one another's intentions" (p. 117).

Pleasant (2011) identified reactions related to guilt and animosity as the Discourse of Guilt, which was described as instead of focusing on introspection of one's guilt, anger is projected externally on the perceived cause of the guilt, in this case women. These views of women easily fall into Glick and Fiske's (1996) category of hostile sexism, which has been argued to actually promote social change, while the more subtle and seemingly positive benevolent sexism undermines it (Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 1996).

### **Summary**

This study demonstrated that gender bias in male counselors continues to exist and has the potential of impacting female clients, peers, and faculty. The qualitative approach to this research illuminated greater understanding of the male participants' perceptions of females through their experiences and narratives. As such, this study

provided an important and unique contribution to the literature of gender-related issues and concerns in counseling education and training.

This study highlighted the importance of gender as a factor in counseling and counseling relationships and value of education and training to this subject matter.

Trepal et al. (2008) summarized it best:

Gender is an important client characteristic that impacts every individual, couple, and family who seeks mental health services; thus, perceptions of gender is a topic that needs to be further explored in order for graduate training programs to implement appropriate training and coursework and for counselors to practice ongoing self-assessment. (p. 153)

This study sought to further understand male counseling student's perceptions of women. As mentioned above, gender is a key characteristic of our clients and one that needs to be considered, and self-awareness regarding gender and power needs to be brought to the forefront of one's mind. As has been discussed in this research, women in particular experience unique gender concerns, which can be quite damaging, "...certain individuals (women) are perceived as less human under conditions of appearance focus" (Heflick et al., 2010, p. 580).

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APPENDIX A

Journal Article

## **MALE COUNSELING STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE CLIENTS, PEERS, AND FACULTY**

United States society was built on a history of patriarchy, sexism, and oppression; thus men and women are viewed as different and are treated differently. Despite the backlash against feminism in the 1990s, the counseling profession has attempted to address sexism and oppression through its commitment to cultural competency and focus on social justice. In line with efforts to address gender bias and sexual inequality over the past two decades, the present study sought to examine 10 male counseling students' perceptions and narratives related to female clients, peers, and faculty.

### **A Culture of Oppression**

Issues pertaining to women and gender have a considerable impact on counseling and counselor education and training. Our culture is deeply rooted in patriarchy (i.e., the conviction that men are more valuable than women) and androcentrism (i.e., the concept that because men are more valuable, women are compared or judged based on masculine qualities and standards which they are unlikely to attain) (Brown Travis & Meginnis-Payne, 2001). Male privilege and power have been the cultural norm in the United States and are believed to significantly contribute to gender biases and the objectification of women (Worell & Johnson, 2001). For our society to progress beyond its historic oppression, it is essential to recognize that unearned privilege bestowed upon men and male privilege has a counter and deleterious effect on women and men alike (Freire, 1970; McIntosh, 1992).

Women encounter many forms of interlocking gender-based oppression (e.g., sexual objectification, sexism, lookism, and sexual violence) that restrict their liberties.



The objectification of women includes viewing them as possessions or sexual objects (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007). Sexual objectification “is the experience of being treated *as a body* (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others [men]” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 174). Gender bias and sexual objectification underlie many forms of oppression of women (e.g., rape, lower status and economic standing, domestic violence).

Sexism is defined as “hostility toward women” by either men or women (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 491). Glick and Fiske (1996) recognized that sexism is an unusual form of prejudice because men are in power, yet depend on women for a variety of reasons. As a result of this complexity, two types of sexism were identified: hostile and benevolent, which form the more encompassing construct of ambivalent sexism. Hostile sexism, refers to overt, negative or antagonistic feelings toward women (i.e., women should submit) and benevolent sexism is more covert and on the surface, seems to be positive (i.e., women should be cherished). Benevolent sexism, while seeming slightly more positive, continues to oppress and diminishes women’s credibility (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Women are extolled and “cherished” due to their vulnerabilities and need for protection.

Culturally, a woman’s credibility is often related to others’ perceptions of her competency. Status characteristics theory (SCT) (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977) explains how people organize and associate individuals around characteristics such as race, gender, and appearance. An individual’s character is judged on degrees of competency, and those who possess undesirable characteristics (i.e., women) are paired with lower expectations of competence. Umberson and Hughes (1987) noted this

tendency specifically related to attractiveness and found that physical attractiveness positively affected a person's mental health and well-being. Characteristics, like attractiveness, served as a visible means of discrimination, similar to race and gender.

Attractive people were attributed with and perceived to hold positive characteristics simply based on their attractive appearance. Women who were considered unattractive were in a double bind because they were likely to have characteristics that were associated with less competence and were unlikely to be awarded unearned positive characteristics based on their appearance. Glick, Larsen, Johnson, and Branstiter (2005) noted women dressed in a more seductive or sexy fashion were at an advantage in service roles (i.e., waitresses and secretaries) and gained more social and economic benefits (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Alternatively, women dressed seductively or in a sexualized manner were judged as less capable, less smart and when viewed as less credible women can be at greater risk of objectification (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007).

Women in academia are afflicted with a triple bind; in addition to gender, they are scrutinized and judged based on age and looks (i.e., lookism), which are conditions their male colleagues do not experience (Granleese & Sayer, 2006). Female academics were viewed as less attractive than females in business, suggesting that lack of attractiveness was actually an expectation in the academy. These expectations may have placed attractive female academics at a disadvantage because it was difficult for colleagues and students to look beyond their appearance (Granleese & Sayer, 2006). Ageism and lookism, in addition to the gender based expectations of women in academia (i.e., lower scholarly production), and the demands of childbearing, may all be contributors to women being less likely to be tenured (Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008).

Images, such as visual media contribute to the sexual objectification of women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). One of the consequences of the constant barrage of and focus on women's appearance is the propensity for women to be viewed as objects to be evaluated, both by others and themselves (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Women are sexualized in many realms, including in the counseling relationship. Interpreting and misinterpreting sexual intent (Koukounas & Letch, 2001) are likely to have a strong influence on communication and relationships between women and men and may be a cause of misunderstandings and mistaken beliefs between genders. Often, this problem and the responsibility of misperceptions of sexual intent have been placed on the shoulders of women, including the responsibility for rape (Burt, 1980), domestic violence (Walker, 1979) and sexual contact within therapeutic relationships.

Women are at greater risk of becoming a victim of therapist-client sex (TCS) (Ben-Ari & Somer, 2004) and "...offending therapists are overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) male while exploited clients are overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) female" (Pope, 2001, III. Gender Differences, para. 1). Counselors are often viewed as a person in authority, simply by virtue of position, while clients often feel vulnerable and emotionally fragile when they come to counseling. The relationship between counselor and client is a special relationship, and the counselor is responsible for implementing and maintaining boundaries in the relationship (ACA, 2005; Pope, 2001). Women in this culture face a multitude of gender based expectations and resulting oppressions, which are likely to impede their mental health.

## **Objectification Theory**

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) provided a framework, objectification theory, to understand the sexual objectification of women. Objectification theory is relevant to counseling and counselor training because sexual objectification is recognized as a type of gender oppression that contributes to a range of other forms of discrimination toward women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The attention and scrutiny placed on women's bodies, women's clothing, and women's appearance has far reaching and deep seated implications for women's mental health, namely unipolar depression, sexual dysfunction, violence and abuse, and eating disorders (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). The question remains, in what manner, if any, are today's counselors aware of and confronting or addressing oppressive and discriminatory treatment of women.

### **Gender-Related Education and Training of Counselors**

In the summer 2005 edition of *Journal of Counseling & Development*, Kees et al. wrote about envisioning a future that is free of oppression, honorable, and fair to all. The topic of gender was last highlighted in the counseling literature in the mid 1990s, when it was noted to be key to counselor education and training and an ethical obligation in the education and training of counselors (Daniluk, Stein, & Bockus, 1995; Stevens-Smith, 1995). Yet, twenty years later, as noted by Kees, et al. (2005), the issue of gender remained a neglected topic in the counseling literature, and women's inequality remained unaddressed in counselor education and training.

Gender is a factor or characteristic that applies to every single person, thus it is a critical component of one's identity and provides a lens through which the world is viewed (Stevens-Smith, 1995). Although gender is referenced in the CACREP 2009

Standards, the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) Code of Ethics, and the ACA *Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2005), in practice, it appears that counselors are not being adequately trained to provide ethical services related to gender and in particular women's concerns.

### **Counselor Self-Awareness**

Self-examination and awareness are critical and ethical considerations in terms of understanding one's own gender biases and the potential impact of these biases on clients, specifically women (Broverman et al., 1970; Stevens-Smith, 1995). In an often-cited, landmark study, Broverman et al., (1970) found that clinicians held sex-role stereotypes and favorable behaviors or characteristics were associated with men. This finding is consistent with the construct of privilege, in this case male privilege, which describes a lack of awareness of the conferred advantage or status.

An unexamined belief in ones' status or superiority can lead to a distorted view of self and others (Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000). Despite the expectations of ethical codes and accreditation standards, gender bias appears to continue among counselors. In 2006, Seem and Clark replicated the work of the Bovermans and their colleagues and assessed social desirability and investigated gender role stereotypes. They noted many changes in regards to gender role stereotyping over the years, and yet, their research showed that many of the same gender biases still exist today; "Counselors-in-training were found to hold two standards for mental health –one for women and another for men" (Seem & Clark, 2006, p. 247).

More recently, Trepal et al. (2008) conducted a study to investigate counselors'-in-training (CIT's) perceptions of gender, and they too found that women and men were viewed in traditional ways, meaning there are certain stereotypical ways that women and

men are viewed; this seemed to impact perceptions and value based attributions. Additionally, they found that the CITs were not always aware of their gender biases, which further supported the need for intentional and focused self assessment relating to gender assumptions and beliefs. The results of the study led the authors to wonder what would happen if a client (or anyone) did not conform to traditional roles; what biases or assumptions would be placed upon that person? It is critical for counselor educators and supervisors to acknowledge gender as a pivotal characteristic by which clients, students, and faculty are assessed.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The philosophical perspective adopted in this qualitative study was a postmodern, constructivism stance. Constructivism is the belief or acceptance that reality is an individual concept rather than a global truth (Ponterotto, 2005). From a constructivist ontological view, reality is multifaceted, as opposed to solitary in nature (Najafi-Ghezalje & Emami, 2009). Additionally, feminism provided a second dimension of my theoretical framework. From a research perspective, a feminist stance takes into consideration, among other issues, the importance of reflexivity, the personal is political, the use of power and oppression, and gender (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994). More explicitly, the crux of feminist research is to intentionally affect social change (Worell & Remer, 2003) and to empower the oppressed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

A constructivist and feminist paradigm are suited for the areas of study of counseling and gender. Defining feminism and its application to counseling is complex; however, Worell and Remer (2003) offered this succinct expression, "Equality of opportunity, respect, and fair treatment for all persons is essential" (p. 17). An advocacy

and social justice platform supports the importance of highlighting women and gender issues in counseling and informed this inquiry.

### **Sources of Data**

All participants were over the age of 18, male, self-identified as heterosexual, masters-level students enrolled in a graduate counseling program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), CACREP equivalent, or accredited by another professional body, such as the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) or equivalent, who were currently seeing clients either in a practicum or internship setting. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 47 years with a median age of 34.5 years old. All participants identified as white or Caucasian.

The first and second individual interviews (N =20) were completed between February and September 2011, demonstrating prolonged engagement with the data. In addition to the interviews, participants were sent four journal prompts via email after the first and before the second interview. The content of the prompts were as follows: (a) the first prompt was sent following the first interview to elicit any additional thoughts or feelings the participants had regarding the first interview; (b) in the second prompt the participants were asked to examine pictures from *Vogue* magazine and respond to the images of women depicted in the pictures as if they were a client, peer and faculty member; (c) in the third prompt, participants were asked to identify and reflect on the personal qualities they expect from a female client, peer and faculty member; and (d) in the fourth and final prompt, participants were asked to identify two artifacts (physical representations) that aligned with their positive and negative perceptions of women (e.g.,

one they embraced and one they found offensive). Participants were asked to journal about these articles or representations and the meaning for them.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

All transcripts and journal prompts were reviewed for accuracy and clarity and the process of open coding was initiated. Participants' statements were read and considered for meaning and perception related to participants' views of gender, gender roles, and gender expectations of female clients, peers, and faculty members. Statements were identified and placed into broad categories with similar meanings. To assist in this process, qualitative data analysis software was utilized. The software was used to organize and manage the data, which supported the analysis. This comprehensive, holistic overview of the data resulted in 1,422 codes containing specific information related to the data; 222 of these codes originated from a combination of the journal prompts and artifacts. The other 1,200 codes were derived from the interview transcripts. These codes were grouped into 15 main codes or broad categories. These categories were analyzed to further distill and organize the data.

Once the broad categories were determined, the data were reviewed a second time using a constant comparative coding method (Merriam, 2009) to identify patterns and sort the data into refined themes; the research questions and theoretical framework were used as a guide for coding. As the data were interpreted to reveal categories and themes, sorting was also based on similarity and uniqueness.

### **Measures to Control for Researcher Bias**

Several measures were taken to control for or identify researcher bias. To assist in identifying and keeping track of biases and thoughts, a researcher journal was



maintained. The journal was used to note thoughts or reactions to the interviews, journal prompt responses or artifacts, readings or research, interactions with the participants, and auditors' feedback. While coding, memos were used to capture reactions to the transcripts and the process of coding the participants' narratives.

Two auditors were used to support the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data analysis. The auditors provided independent feedback regarding the coding, analysis and interpretation of the participant's data. Through this iterative process, numerous questions and perspectives were raised and addressed through a process of discussion and verification. Finally, a member checking process with participants was conducted. Each participant was provided the transcripts of their interviews and with notations of the derived themes. Each was asked to review the transcripts and themes for accuracy and representativeness.

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

All codes from all data sources were subsumed into 15 broad categories. These categories were synthesized into nine themes: *Importance of Gender in Counseling; Gap in Gender Training; Men and Women are Different; Women, the Softer Half; Looks Matter, for Women; Patriarchy's Oppression of Men; It's Not Men's Fault, Women have the Power; Lack of Self-Awareness and Contradictions; and You Can't Trust Most Women.*

### **Importance of Gender in Counseling**

Virtually all of the participants noted that gender played a significant role in counseling. Gender was present in who they were and how they acted, believed, counseled, and seemed to influence their interactions with clients, peers, and faculty.

Participants' recognized the influence of gender in aspects such as clients' preferences for, and degrees of comfort with, either a female or male therapist. For example, Nick discussed how clients are initially asked if they have a gender preference in their counselor:

... it's interesting to see that on the phone during the first interview, one of our questions is, 'Hey, do you have a preference gender, female or male counselor?' And a lot – most of the time they say, 'No, no. Just somebody I can connect with.' And then, once you get to the intake and they have seen you and they have seen our office and kind of what we're about, the answer changes 70 percent of the time [the client prefers a female counselor].

Several participants noted that certain clients were likely to feel more or less comfortable with a female or male. Nick referenced how a female who experienced sexual abuse by a man will likely want to see a female counselor. They also commented on the impact of gender on females who have been sexually assaulted, "...males can trigger a lot of trauma, being a male [counselor] with a female client."

### **Gap in Gender Training**

The "gap" in gender training was reflected in the sentiments and commentary from participants regarding how gender potentially impacts counselors, clients, and the process of supervision. Most participants, ( $n = 7$ ), reported that the topic of gender was covered in their program; however, 30% ( $n = 3$ ), were less definitive, stating, "Somewhat, yeah"; "a little bit"; "If I remember so, yeah."

Pedro initially indicated in his interview that the topic of gender was covered in his training, yet in his first journal prompt response, he expressed needing more guidance and in his second interview he expressed feeling that he was inadequately trained in gender issues, "And I think the thing that's most shocking to me, at least in [his program],

Masters of Arts in Counseling is how little attention is really devoted to gender as a topic.”

A second element emerged from the data and warranted identification under this theme: Therapist-Client Sex and participants’ perception about sexual attraction. Most participants noted passive messages related to the potential for sexual attraction to [female] clients in their training, and participants appeared unable to distinguish heterosexual bias or gender-stereotyped expectations related to the *risk or threat* related to counseling female clients. Lee stated, “I don’t know that it’s [therapist-client sex] been addressed in the training so much as just saying supervision is a good thing to have...” John indicated, “It’s certainly never been discussed. I can’t think of anytime that it was discussed in any of our classes.” Pedro also shared his dismay at not having an opportunity in his training to openly discuss and explore gender issues and sexual attraction to clients. He remarked:

...it's like what do you do if you are sexually attracted to one of your clients. I mean do you disclose that in session, do you, you know, cover it up? You know, what's appropriate? And none of that's ever really talked about in any of the training that we've received as counselors in training.

From the participants’ open and candid remarks, training and discussions regarding sexual attraction and tension with clients were a vitally perceived need. Sexuality and attraction are normal human responses that are further complicated by society’s gender and sexuality messages. Sexual feelings and tension are extremely important to the intimate counseling relationship, and counselors-in-training should be given the opportunity to learn, reflect, and discuss how they can manage their sexuality in a professional and thoughtful way.

## **Men and Women are Different**

Participants expressed a variety of opinions about whether females and males are similar or different, and to what degree they are such. The explanations of these similarities and differences were just as varied, with some participants noting the role of cultural attribution and some noting the influences of biology. Matt, for example, struggled to even answer the question, “I think women can be just as manly as men and men can be just as womanly as women. So, I can't. I can't answer that one for you.” Pedro saw gender as a continuum “...I kind of have this perception that gender is very fluid, ...but I also believe that there's a lot of culturally-imposed expectations that manifest themselves in the way people act and exhibit their gender and the things that are involved.”

Those who saw differences talked about the reasons for the differences being a combination of biology and culture. Lee stated it as:

There are big differences, and I think a lot of that – I think some of it's biological, but I tend to think that most of it today is just the culture and the gender roles that we've been assigned. There are biological differences that I believe part of why men deal with aggression more has to do with just the biological makeup. Women, I think, deal with some of the – a broader range of emotions, I think, because of their biological makeup and what's going – but, then again, a lot of that, too, is what's allowed and what's not allowed.

Participants did not seem to have a clear sense of how and why gender differences existed.

## **Women, the Softer Half**

Participants reported typical gender role expectations for women. Pedro, when referencing female clients reported, “They just seem more open and willing to accept and be present and be a part of what's going on, and not nearly as resistant as males.” This

sentiment was shared by others and a general consensus was that women are more emotional, and as clients, they are *easier* to work with than male clients.

Matt described a difference in how women and men respond, men are more succinct, and women tend to be wordy. Matt used an example from his parents, "...I know from personal experience, I know this is how I felt. My mom, 'Blah, blah.' When my dad spoke I don't know if it was like the tone of his voice, he's louder it catches your attention more."

Matt continued to voice the differences between males and females faculty. He noted women are "very" emotional, soft, and indirect. He also articulated that female faculty members were "less academic", and some were "extremely emotional" while male professors were more academic and really taught "by the book." Whereas, female instructors invited students perspectives and let them express their emotions in the classroom.

Matt referred to the males as "professors" and the females as "instructors," hence a different degree of prestige awarded by gender. Additionally, referencing teaching "by the book," participants seemed to respond to the perceived authority/credibility [textbooks] of and directiveness of male professors in contrast to the emergent learning designs and ambiguity perceived to be presented by female professors. Overall, women were identified as softer, more emotional, more concerned with relationships, and more verbal than men.

### **Looks Matter, for Women**

Lookism (Granleese & Sayer, 2006), the determination of a woman's value and intellect based solely on her outward appearance, was frequently and persistently

referenced in participants' perceptual narratives about female clients, peers, and faculty. Doug stated, "... they [women] are more or less objectified by others, men and women alike, for their physical beauty." In the first interview, participants were read a scenario regarding three women who were dressed in a variety of ways. Participants were asked to describe their impressions of these women in terms of intelligence, attractiveness, and kindness and to identify which woman would most likely represent a client, peer, or faculty. All of the participants, except Pedro, had a critical reaction to the woman described to be wearing a short skirt, for example Bob stated:

... it's more the short skirt type thing because it's just that I just see it as attention seeking type of thing where you want people to look at you and you want - you're trying to get at something. Either it (pause)... and maybe you were just raised that you wear miniskirts all the time.

Most, if not all, of their responses were negative in nature; participants' attributed scheming motives to women's behavior (i.e., dressing in a short skirt), expressed feeling they were being taken advantage of by women, and evoked a desire for many participants to pathologize the women in the pictures. For example, when considering the picture of the woman in a short skirt, Nick stated,

...I would be on guard and on the look-out for personality features of insecurity, narcissism and possible attachment disorders. Personally, I am hyperaware and on-guard around women who seemingly 'use' their sexuality in an overt way to express themselves. I tend to not trust someone like the women in picture one until I get to know them.

Doug added, "Men may ignore or downplay their [women in short skirts] intelligence. They may use them for sex or as a trophy. Other women may be jealous and therefore undercut them."

Rich, Lee, and Bob seemed critical and concerned about the women in the pictures, wondering aloud about their potential problems with substance abuse, eating

disorders, exploitation, and ageism, and recognized the exploitative aspects for women, such as airbrushing. However, these sentiments may be damaging to women, in that they are insulting and pathologizing.

Related to attractiveness negatively impacting one's competence, Doug hypothesized, "... it's probably easier to undercut a woman's competence if she's also attractive just because - kind of like the dumb blonde sort of thing." Later, however, Doug theorized about how being attractive assists one in "earning" prestige, "... I think it does - I mean, the popular belief that if someone's attractive and they're in a high position that they probably earned it because they were attractive. That's probably somewhat true, I don't know."

### **Patriarchy's Oppression of Men**

This theme represented the participants' narratives which speak to awareness of patriarchy and the effect on masculinity. Similar to the participants' experiences and personal stories, the participants displayed a range of gender sensitivity related to the effects of patriarchy on masculinity. For example, Pedro and Jackson shared specific examples when they were challenged or judged based on masculine standards. Pedro noted that personally and in the workforce he has not "fit into the typical" expectations for men in our culture.

These two individuals expressed a greater awareness of gender sensitivity, perhaps because they had experienced the oppression of being different. Jackson indicated at times peers and society tried to keep him on the "male track" when he has taken a perceived detour by participating in less masculine activities, such as track and choir. Participants who shared experiences of having felt personally challenged by

masculine norms appeared to embrace greater gender sensitivity as evidenced by their narrative, perceptions, and beliefs surrounding gender and women.

Not only did the participants identify their own personal struggles with patriarchy and masculinity, some shared challenges experienced by other men. Rich thoughtfully discussed his concerns about some of the men in the group counseling sessions he runs, “And, that’s one of the things we talk about in this men’s group, is what does society teach us, what do we feel driven to do as men, and how much of it can we look at and say, ‘You know what, how I am is okay as a man.’” He witnesses these men struggling with society’s messages and how they are supposed to be competitive and assertive, without being too aggressive. Awareness of the effects of patriarchy on masculinity may be a helpful avenue for some to be more aware of patriarchy effects on women and on culture in general.

### **It’s Not Men’s Fault, Women have the Power**

Several participants’ comments or expressions coalesced into a theme of rejection or denial of male privilege and sexism. These responses came in the form of rationalizing upon reflection, feeling victimized or oppressed themselves, or blaming women. Matt, for example, defended his biased reaction to the women in the *Vogue* pictures by stating, “I feel that the reason for this reaction is because some women dress to get a reaction from men and some dress for comfort. Nobody will ever convince me that wearing thong underwear is comfortable.” Matt was unable to articulate how patriarchal societies have taught women to dress for men’s pleasure, and when they do get the desired “reaction,” women are responsible for its creation. Lee noted an equity between the genders in that “men suffer from women’s stereotypes just as much as



women, maybe not just as much, but still detrimental.” He referenced rape and explained how this affects men,

... men suffer from that as well as women do, of this idea of women say no when they mean yes. It can be terrifying to be a man and go out because you're not – you're never sure, and you have to be so careful.

Matt furthered the notion that women mislead and victimize men, “don’t ask for attention if you don't want it, don't get angry when you get attention,” indicating that the *real* victims are men. Participants’ lack of awareness related to gender and power dynamics seemed to permeate this theme.

The potential for men to be victimized by women’s power was reflected in Doug’s statements where he acknowledged being intimidated by beautiful women because they displayed confidence and power, which was uncomfortable for him.

Referring to the women in the *Vogue* pictures, Doug noted if they were his female peers:

I would struggle with being intimidated by these women. I would see them as confident and powerful and would feel insecure in getting to know them initially. I would assume that they have it all together: a great career AND a lot of influence and power due to their beauty. Honestly, I would be jealous and perhaps a little bitter.... until I had established some kind of connection with them.

It is as if these men were saying, “How dare a woman be attractive, confident, and powerful; it makes us [men] feel uncomfortable and uncertain.” The sentiment that attractive women have *little* to complain about or should not be concerned with sexism was summarized by Rich’s statement:

For an attractive woman to say, ‘It’s not easy being attractive. I’ve had to work really hard to overcome that,’ I think a lot of us would be like, ‘Really?’ I mean there are greater curses, especially in our country, than being attractive.

These discourses seemed to discount the oppression and sexism experienced by women and to minimize the responsibility of men in general to acknowledge and address it as such.

### **Lack of Self-Awareness and Contradictions**

The absence of awareness regarding gender sensitivity was alarming, when considering the importance of gender in counseling and counseling relationships. The most dramatic example of absence of self-awareness was demonstrated by Matt's comments regarding his declaration of being bias-free. Matt repeatedly claimed he either had "...less bias towards women than a lot of men do" or astoundingly "no bias whatsoever." Throughout the interview, Matt continued to share his biased and judgmental beliefs related to women and gender without recognition of the nature of his commentary or reflection of his lack of cultural awareness or competency. For example, the following series of quotations was excerpted from one of Matt's narratives to illustrate the rapid progression of his assertion of non-judgmental beliefs in contrast to the reality of overt judging (*italics added*):

*These women seem to want to express themselves in a fashionable way. I would not judge them whether they were clients, peers or faculty. They could smile a bit more. Maybe they are trying too hard. Either way, I would not judge these individuals.*

*I would not judge these women whether they were clients, peers or faculty. The yellow dress in the upper left hand corner is a little too short, so I would not like to see a faculty member wearing that because I might not take her serious. At the same time, a person's personality can take them a long way. All of these women in each picture may be very intelligent and their personalities could be great. I probably would be very judgmental of the women in the first picture.*

### **You Can't Trust Most Women**

A theme of the participants' words and experiences was their stated or inferred lack of trust or suspicion of women. Nick, acknowledge a distrust or skepticism of women's "motives" as witnessed in response to the picture of a woman in the short skirt. He stated:

Really, I would be skeptical. I'd be like, 'She's' – it's a kind of a turn off for me. If you think you're trying to flaunt something, which is fine. People can do what they want. But, it always lends an air to me of just they're trying to get something or get somewhere.

Matt lamented about women's deceptive messages to men- "It's like a mixed message. You're dressing like this but you don't want the attention. Which one is it? You know?"

Matt talked about his negative artifact being the lyrics "Crazy Bitch" by Buck Cherry and how women dance to this provocative song and how that attracts negative attention of men. He declared it "represents women in such a negative way it makes me sick!" Bewildered, Matt contemplated how when the derogatory song, "Crazy Bitch", is played in the bar the women "go crazy and dance to it," to him it feels like they have little respect for themselves. Matt expressed confusion and even annoyance that women complain about being oppressed then flaunt it in men's face by dancing to a derogatory song. The potentially unclear or questionable intentions of women seemed to perplex, confuse, and anger some of the participants. Participants and their comments appeared to support the notion that some men believe women's motives are often sexual in nature, that men can be and frequently are victims of women's sexuality, and that women intentionally prey upon men's vulnerabilities. This perception and seeming distrust could serve as a barrier to open dialogue between and among women and men, and a stumbling block to expanding trust and respect.

### **Discussion**

Women seem to be placed in a double bind. If they are relational, talkative or dress sexy, they tended to fit the expectations of most of the participants and were perceived to be less intelligent, softer, and more attractive to participants. Participants

indicated that they liked to look at “sexy” women more, yet they judge them harshly; if they dress too casual or sloppy, they seem less intelligent; if they are too attractive, they may be judged as “earning” any status or accolades because of their looks; or if they are too attractive, they may be held to a higher standard.

### **The Need for Training and Education**

The current participants’ sentiments reflected a 20 year old finding (Scher & Good, 1990) that emphasized the importance of gender training for counselors in training and acknowledged concerns that training programs were not adequately addressing gender issues. The obvious question is: What, if any, change has occurred in the intervening 20 or more years?

Consistent with what is expected of counselors’ cultural competencies, the domains of race and sexual orientation (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), it is critical that counselors become aware of and accountable for their biases related to gender and gender role expectations. Authors noted that counselors need to engage in a self-reflective process to increase their awareness of these biases and remain open to exploring them in context to their work with clients (Seem & Johnson, 1998; Wester & Trepal, 2008). The focus on training on issues related to gender and gender role expectations seemed to have receded into the background of counselor training. The counseling professions’ move away from gender as a salient component of the human experience may be due, in part, to the ever expanding curriculum in and multiple foci of counselor training programs, a continued emphasis on the dimensions of race and sexual orientation. Whatever the origins of this decline, counselors need to understand the role gender plays in their lives and how difficult culturally competent counseling may be

without a personal understanding and intentional reflection related to gender, gender roles, and gender expression (Wester & Trepal, 2008).

As discussed by Hanna, Talley, and Guindon (2000), the exploratory model, an approach that highlights awareness, empathy, and perception of the oppressed and the oppressor, may be one avenue to accomplish this with counseling students. An important aspect described by Hanna, et al. (2000) is for counselors to understand the nature of oppression, the experiences of the oppressed and oppressors, and how the politics of power creates and sustains oppression. Hays and Chang (2003) identified the importance of counselors-in-training to gain self-awareness in the area of white privilege, oppression and racial identity development. As these authors noted, current training does not adequately address these issues, and as a result, individuals in dominant groups may unintentionally perpetuate oppression of others. Given the results of this study, a need exists for increased self awareness related to gender issues on the part of many counseling students.

One issue participants discussed was that of sexual tension, sexual power and perceived sexual intent. Although therapist-client sex (TCS) is uncommon, the effects are detrimental and as a profession we should be vigilant to prevent any such infractions. TCS is an extreme example of sexual objectification, and given that most TCS involves a male counselor or provider and a female client, discussions and personal reflections focused on the topics of gender, gender roles, heterosexism, patriarchy, and rape myth provide a solid foundation for understanding and action in the counseling profession.

The examination of power in relationships is an integral component of feminist therapy (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004): however, the role of gender (being male), privilege

and power seems to permeate most of our relationships. Therefore, placing gender and self-examination as focal points in counselor training and education appears to be warranted (Hoffman, 1996).

### **Sex Bias and Sexism in Counseling**

Numerous studies support the negative attributions placed upon women based on feminine traits, such as emotionality and relational orientation, and physical appearance (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007; Seem & Clark, 2006). These attributions often coalesce into perceived female pathology as discussed by participants— low self-esteem, body image issues and eating disorders – for girls and women in our culture or result in violence toward or sexual assault of women (Choate, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for counselors to understand the systemic and pervasive nature of gender bias and sexism of women and particularly males’ role in the complex dynamics.

Consistent with other research, the participants in this study acknowledged women are often objectified and judged based upon their looks. The participants viewed women as more emotional and more relational (Wester & Trepal, 2008). Females were described as “soft”, which may be interpreted as fragile, as it was thought that females have difficulty with tolerating direct communication. Participants described females in pathological ways, from insecure to using their sexuality for personal gain.

Participants saw faculty as less academic than their male counterparts and placed additional expectations on female faculty to be warm and not particularly attractive or sexual. It was hypothesized that men, in general, were listened to more because they are more succinct when they speak and their voice is louder and deeper which catches one’s attention. Participants also expressed frustration with female faculty for feeling

disenfranchised in the classroom. The sentiments of the participants supported the notion of how gender and power can negatively affect women in academia (Bennett, 1982; Denker, 2009). Once again, women were branded as softer, more emotional, more concerned with relationships, and more verbal (but less heard) than men.

Knowing the cost of sexism for girls and women, it is alarming that the field of counseling continues to understate the importance of keeping the impact of gender on women at the forefront when working toward cultural competence in training and education. McAuliffe (2008) highlighted the necessity for culturally alert counseling, including gender, noting the ethical responsibility and professional self-interest. As outlined in the multicultural competencies (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992), this includes awareness, knowledge, and skill. If the effects of gender bias in counseling continue to be ignored or downplayed, sexism is likely to continue in counseling. With the professions call to cultural competency and social justice, it seems a tragic oversight to allow this to happen.

An important element is investigating and understanding men's perception of sexism and how they believe they are impacted by it (Gilbert & Rader, 2001; Pleasants, 2011). It is valuable to have open and respectful dialogue about gender, oppression and power to gain greater insight about how men see their role and responsibility, if any, in sexism (Gilbert & Rader, 2001; Pleasants, 2011). Gilbert and Rader (2001) discussed this challenge in the framework of dominant discourses, and Liu (2005) in dominant masculinity; these scholars called attention to the necessary step of groups in power (men) needing to examine and willingly acknowledge their position of power and privilege. When men ignore or downplay their gender privilege, like race, oppression

may be unintentionally perpetuated (Gilbert & Rader, 2001; Liu, 2005). Without this scrutiny, it may be difficult for some men and some women, to consider the impact of gender and power and analyze these phenomena in an honest and vulnerable way, as was born out in several participants' responses. A very intentional and respectful training is called for to allow for dialogue among and within genders to openly and honestly discuss and experience gender and power analysis.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In terms of limitations to this study, the following elements are note worthy. All participants identified as white or Caucasian. This of course needs to be considered when looking at their perceptions of gender, to keep in mind they are speaking from the dominant culture in terms of race. Another factor was that the two auditors were female, resulting in an all female review of the data. Discrepancies between the researcher and auditors existed and actually helped to provide the researcher greater clarity in interpretations and biases.

### **Implications for Counselor Education and Recommendations**

The most salient implications for the field and areas of future research are gender training for counselors, including concentration on self-awareness and the barrier of mistrust. It is important to learn what male (and female) counselors' perceptions are, to gain a greater understanding of those perceptions, and then look for ways to bridge gaps in gender understanding in training.

More work needs to be done in the area of research based training practices; developing curriculum and effective training using the research of organizations like the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2007) would be a next step. Needed are



operationalized, practical, and effective applications that can be utilized in counselor education and training. Greater research is needed into existing gender-related education and training to discover more about its adequacy and effectiveness. More research is needed, particularly qualitative research, with male and female CITs, to further understand their perceptions, reactions, and development surrounding gender issues and concerns; the same type of research needs to be conducted with faculty to assess their knowledge and skills in teaching and training in regards to gender-related issues and their ability to facilitate learning environments conducive to supporting growth and development in CIT's. Qualitative research methods and longitudinal studies might be particularly helpful and important to these gender-related investigations. With longitudinal studies, we may be able to observe developmental characteristics and growth in CITs which could inform education and training, and circumstances which either contribute to or take away from an individuals' ability to internalize gender sensitivity and awareness.

### **Education and Training**

Two critical areas of gender education are content and process. It is recommended that training about diverse groups (i.e. gender) be both integrative and specific (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004), meaning issues such as gender sensitivity are infused in all counseling courses and a specific course or training should be done on gender alone.

In teaching gender-related issues, curriculum, models, and frameworks need to be considered. It is critical for programs to have as Atkinson and Hackett (2004) suggested a master plan, in which gender-related knowledge, experiences, and content are identified

and relevant to courses being offered. Content and process need to be considered in gender-related education and training. In keeping with the CACREP standards experiential exercises should be incorporated to support the development and growth of self and other-awareness.

A vital aspect of this training is the intentional use of self-reflection as a means to increase self-awareness (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). Students also need to understand how sexism and bias affect women depending on their status (i.e. faculty), their appearance, and their behaviors, as demonstrated by the participants' responses to the expectations of females depending on whether they were a client, peer, or faculty. Based on research and professional standards, it is critical for students to experience and internalize gender-related learning to aid them in facing their own biases (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004).

### **Professional Development and Accountability of Faculty**

The role of the instructor is important (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004), and a supportive instructor can create a safe, open, and trusting environment, which is key (Cintron, 2011). Faculty need to be role models of gender sensitivity and awareness. It is crucial that faculty members are adequately trained in gender-related topics, gender sensitive education and training processes, and continue to reflect on and address their own biases (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004).

There are numerous elements to consider related to counseling pedagogy and practice. Certainly, reducing the polarization and inaccuracy related to the term feminism and promotion of a socially just dialog would be a start. Like the label, feminists, the topic of gender needs to be defused for individuals to hear the voice of those with less

privilege and become aware of their privilege and be willing to take responsibility for one's role in the distribution of power in society. The critical need for gender awareness and sensitivity in counselor training and education seems apparent and supports what so many authorities in counselor education have already suggested (Atkinson & Hackett, 2004; Comstock et al., 2003; Myers et al., 2005). It is critical to have a learning environment and facilitator to foster receptivity, measured risk taking, and introspection, and is practical and provides opportunities for students to be active and involved in change. This environment is one where resistance is identified and worked through in a productive way rather than in a way which leads to disengagement. This supportive environment is directly opposed to one which produces defensiveness, blame, and shame. To achieve this type of setting and maintain it, facilitators must not only have the knowledge and skills, they must also possess certain characteristics and development themselves to encourage change and growth in students or participants versus defensiveness and fear.

This study demonstrated that gender bias in male counselors may continue to exist and has the potential of impacting female clients, peers, and faculty. The qualitative approach to this research illuminated greater understanding of the male participants' perceptions of females through their experiences and narratives. As such, this study provided an important and unique contribution to the literature of gender-related issues and concerns in counseling education and training.

Gender is a key characteristic of our clients and one that needs to be considered and self-awareness regarding gender and power needs to be brought to the forefront of one's mind. As has been discussed in this research, women in particular experience

unique gender concerns, which can be quite damaging, "...certain individuals (women) are perceived as less human under conditions of appearance focus" (Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2010, p. 580).

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APPENDIX B

Interview Guide/Questions:

Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty

Pretext: I want to start off this interview by telling you that it is my belief that all individuals are influenced by gender and within our culture and individual environments each one of us has gender biases and beliefs, both conscious and unconscious.

Interviewee Demographic Information:

Age:

Race or Ethnic Identity:

Have you completed a multicultural counseling course during your graduate studies?

Was gender a topic covered in this course?

How many students are in your program?

Of the clients you are currently seeing, what percentage is female and male?

Of your peers, what percentage is female and male?

Of your faculty, what percentage is female and male?

Semi-structured interview questions:

1. Tell me what drew you to train as a counselor? What types of clients would you like to serve when you have completed your training?
2. I am interested in studying gender and the role it may or may not play in your perceptions of those around you; clients, peers, and faculty. Please describe for me the typical female client, peer and faculty member and the typical male client, peer and faculty member.
3. Now, based on those descriptions, to what degree do you perceive men and women to be similar? How are they different?
4. What cultural influences have impacted your perceptions about men and women?
5. What personal influences have impacted your perceptions about men and women?
6. What educational experiences have you had, at any level, that have impacted your perceptions of men and women?
7. How would you define the terms gender and gender roles? From your point of view, describe the gender roles for men and for women?
8. What role, if any, does gender play in counseling?
9. What makes a person attractive?
10. What makes a person competent?
11. In what way, if any, does one's attractiveness impact your view of their competence?
12. How do you decide whether or not a woman is attracted to you sexually?
13. I want to read you a scenario and ask you to respond to it: Assume we are sitting at a one-way mirror and three women walk in to the room we are viewing. The first is a young woman who is well dressed in a short skirt, stylish blouse, jewelry and high heels. She smiles at the one way mirror and sits down. Next, a second young woman walks in and she is wearing a pair of cargo shorts, a tee shirt, and flip flops. She, too smiles at the one way mirror and sits down. Finally, a third woman walks in and she

is dressed in a pair of slacks and a blouse. She looks toward the mirror and smiles, and sits down.

- a. What are your first impressions of these women in terms of intelligence, attractiveness, kindness?
- b. Which of them would you be most likely to believe was a client, a peer, or a faculty member?
- c. On what did you base your decisions?

APPENDIX C

Journal Prompts for Participants:

Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty

Prompt #1: Reflection on our initial interview a week ago, please journal about any additional thoughts or feelings you had following our time together, relating to what was discussed.

Prompt #2: Attached are pictures from *Vogue* magazine, after viewing them please write about what you think about the women depicted in the pictures if they were a client, peer and faculty member.

Prompt #3: Identify or reflect on what are expected qualities you hold for a female client, peer and faculty member.

Prompt #4: Please consider and identify two artifacts which represent your perceptions of women, one you embrace, and another you find offensive. Suggested artifacts might include song lyrics, pictures, stories, and media representations (e.g., commercials, television shows, movies), but you are welcome to share any type of artifacts you discover. Please journal about these articles or representations and how they influence you. Please bring the artifacts, if tangible, to the second interview. Lastly, please complete a summary statement regarding what it has been like for you being involved in this research project.



APPENDIX D

Approval and Application for Expedited IRB Review

UNIVERSITY of  
**NORTHERN COLORADO**  
 Institutional Review Board (IRB)



November 30, 2010

TO: Silvia Correa-Torres  
 SPED

FROM: Megan Babkes Stellino, Co-Chair  
 UNC Institutional Review Board

RE: Expedited Review of Proposal, *Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty*, submitted by Jody Huntington (Research Advisor: Linda Black)

First Consultant: The above proposal is being submitted to you for an expedited review. Please review the proposal in light of the Committee's charge and direct requests for changes directly to the researcher or researcher's advisor. If you have any unresolved concerns, please contact Megan Babkes Stellino, School of Sport and Exercise Science, Campus Box 39, (x1809). When you are ready to recommend approval, sign this form and return to me.

I recommend approval as is.



Signature of First Consultant

1-17-2010  
 Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is approved as proposed for a period of one year January 31, 2011 to January 31, 2012

  
 Megan Babkes Stellino, Co-Chair

1/31/2011  
 Date

Comments:

Changes Attached  
 SCT

Application for Expedited IRB Review  
November 15, 2010  
Jody Huntington

### **A. Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to qualitatively explore male counseling student's perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. The problem under study is that gender issues continue to be avoided or understated in the counseling profession and hence women are likely to continue to suffer from the consequences of their personhood being either degraded or undervalued by all counselors, and in particular male counselors, given the patriarchal nature of U.S. society. Counselors are called to be advocates and models of social reform and consciousness. Both females and males can be freed from this artificial bind that has been put upon them in all realms of life. People educated and trained as counselors could be catalysts in the area of gender appreciation and agents of change in the area of gender oppression.

### **B. Methods**

#### **1. Participants**

All participants will be over the age of 18 and will be male, heterosexual, masters-level students currently enrolled in a graduate counseling program accredited by CACREP, and currently seeing clients either in a practicum or internship setting.

A minimum of ten male graduate students, from CACREP accredited graduate counseling programs, will be either directly recruited or recruited via snowball sampling procedures for the study.

Participants will be contacted through the following method; I, the lead investigator will contact program representatives and request a list of male graduate students and their email addresses. I will send an email to the individuals on this list and invite their participation if they meet the criteria of the study.

Participation in the proposed study will be optional and voluntary. Those who chose to participate will not receive any special recognition or compensation. Informed signed consent will (see attached) be collected from all who agree to participate in the study. Participants will be informed that participation in the study will be voluntary and may be terminated at any point at the request of the participant.

Informed Consent attached

No special or vulnerable populations will be included in this study.

Participants will be contacted by the lead investigator following the initial analysis of the data to engage in member-checking of their transcripts and lead investigator derived codes. This process will be undertaken in order to triangulate data and ensure the intended meaning and context of participants' information has been captured.

## **2. Data Collection Procedures**

Participants will be selected by meeting the criteria set forth above, and will be recruited by the lead investigator based on data received via program representatives. Sites will be selected based on geographic convenience and accessibility. All participants will be willing volunteers who are interested in being a part of this project.

Once selected and permission and consent has been obtained, two interviews will be conducted. The first interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes, and the second interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The second interview will be scheduled at the end of the first interview for 60 days in the future. The time between the interviews will allow for follow up questions to emerge from data analysis, and for the data to be interpreted. The participants will engage in member checking of their data at the second interview as well as any needed follow-up or clarifying questions. The initial interviews will be semi-structured, meaning other questions may be asked based on the information provided or clarification may be requested. Through the interview an attempt to gain an understanding of the participant's experience, thoughts, and perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty will be sought.

Between the two interviews the participants will be sent four journaling prompts via emails for their electronic journals. The first prompt will be sent one week following the first interview to elicit any further thoughts or feelings the participants may have regarding the first interview. The second prompt will be sent three weeks following the first interview. Participants will be asked to look at pictures from *Vogue* magazine and write about what they think about the women depicted in the pictures if they were a client, peer and faculty member. The third prompt, will be sent five weeks following the first interview and the participants will be asked to identify or reflect on what are expected qualities they hold for a female client, peer and faculty member. The fourth, and last prompt, will be sent one week prior to the second interview, and the participants will be asked to chose two artifacts which represent their perceptions of women, one they embrace, and another they find offensive. They will be asked to bring these artifacts, if possible, to the second interview. At which time, the researcher will discuss the meaning that the artifacts hold for the participants and document the artifacts via a digital picture. The meaning and nature of the artifacts will be considered data for this study.

Another contribution to the data set will be a researcher's journal. I will record my reflections immediately following the interviews. This will also be kept electronically and is considered to be part of the research database. No deceptive practices will be used during this research.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions Attached Appendix A

Journal prompts for participants Attached Appendix B

### **3. Data Analysis Procedures**

All data collected will be organized into an electronic database. The data includes the transcribed audio interview files, transcriptions of the interviews, participants and researcher's journals, and digital photos of artifacts. A holistic, narrative review and analysis of the data will be undertaken. The data will be reviewed to uncover broad categories, and then using the constant comparative method the data will be further distilled into patterns and themes based on similarities and uniqueness.

From the participant's data, common themes will be organized to tell their story regarding their perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. This information can be utilized to inform further exploration and consideration related to feminist and social justice advocacy in counseling.

Auditors, persons who have published qualitative research, have experience and knowledge pertaining to gender issues, and have trained counselors, will be utilized to support the credibility of this study. The auditors will independently review two participant's transcripts, journal responses, artifact data, codes, and themes, for evidence of bias and over representation. Feedback from these independent reviews will be given to the researcher and any disagreement will be resolved via clarification and consensus. Additionally, a random check of two other participant's data will be performed by the auditors.

An audit trail, a documentation of the research process including challenges encountered and how themes emerged was also electronically maintained.

### **4. Data Handling Procedures**

The interviews will be audio taped to back up notes. The contents of the tapes will be kept private. To further help maintain confidentiality, computer files of information relating to the interviews will be created and names will be replaced by pseudonym identifiers selected by participants. A professional transcription service will be used for tape transcription; a client confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the transcription company will be obtained. The names of participants will not appear in any professional report of this research.

Confidentiality of the data obtained through this study will be maintained in the following ways:

Individuals involved in the study will be known only to the researcher.

Individuals will be allowed to select a pseudonym under which their data will be collected.

Participants will be given written assurances of confidentiality.

Interview data and audiotapes will be secured in a locked cabinet in the office of the researcher.

While confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, every attempt will be made to maximize privacy and protect the confidentiality of the source of the data. The nature of the data and population size is such that there is a very limited likelihood that it could be traced back to the original source using identifiers in the record.

### **C. Risks, Discomforts and Benefits**

Consequences of participating in this study may include an increase in attention to gender awareness, and one's own values and beliefs related to gender. Also, participation in the interviews and journaling may cause physical and emotional fatigue. However, the process of journaling may be helpful in reducing this effect.

The benefit of participation in this study is the potential increase in understanding of the current state of counselor's ability to support an appreciation or oppression of feminist advocacy in counseling. The information may serve to further enhance or strengthen the field of counseling, particularly for females.

### **D. Costs and Compensations**

The costs to individuals who agree to participate will be the time to participate in the interviews and journaling. The individuals will receive a summary of information gleaned from this research.

### **E. Grant Information**

Application for UNC Graduate Student Association – Graduate Research Grant will be submitted.

The following documents are attached:

- Copy of semi-structured interview questions to be covered
- Copy of participants' journal prompts
- Informed consent document

Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty

Pretext: I want to start off this interview by telling you that it is my belief that all individuals are influenced by gender and within our culture and individual environments each one of us has gender biases and beliefs, both conscious and unconscious.

Interviewee Demographic Information:

Age:

Race or Ethnic Identity:

Have you completed a multicultural counseling course during your graduate studies?

Was gender a topic covered in this course?

How many students are in your program?

Of the clients you are currently seeing, what percentage is female and male?

Of your peers, what percentage is female and male?

Of your faculty, what percentage is female and male?

Semi-structured interview questions:

1. Tell me what drew you to train as a counselor? What types of clients would you like to serve when you have completed your training?
2. I am interested in studying gender and the role it may or may not play in your perceptions of those around you; clients, peers, and faculty. Please describe for me the typical female client, peer and faculty member and the typical male client, peer and faculty member.
3. Now, based on those descriptions, to what degree do you perceive men and women to be similar? How are they different?
4. What cultural influences have impacted your perceptions about men and women?
5. What personal influences have impacted your perceptions about men and women?
6. What educational experiences have you had, at any level, that have impacted your perceptions of men and women?
7. How would you define the terms gender and gender roles? From your point of view, describe the gender roles for men and for women?
8. What role, if any, does gender play in counseling?
9. What makes a person attractive?
10. What makes a person competent?
11. In what way, if any, does one's attractiveness impact your view of their competence?
12. How do you decide whether or not a woman is attracted to you sexually?
13. I want to read you a scenario and ask you to respond to it: Assume we are sitting at a one-way mirror and three women walk in to the room we are viewing. The first is a young woman who is well dressed in a short skirt, stylish blouse, jewelry and high heels. She smiles at the one way mirror and sits down. Next, a second young woman walks in and she is wearing a pair of cargo shorts, a tee shirt, and flip flops. She, too smiles at the one way mirror and sits down. Finally, a third woman walks in and she

is dressed in a pair of slacks and a blouse. She looks toward the mirror and smiles, and sits down.

- a. What are your first impressions of these women in terms of intelligence, attractiveness, kindness?
- b. Which of them would you be most likely to believe was a client, a peer, or a faculty member?
- c. On what did you base your decisions?



Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty

Prompt #1: Reflection on our initial interview a week ago, please journal about any additional thoughts or feelings you had following our time together, relating to what was discussed.

Prompt #2: Attached are pictures from *Vogue* magazine, after viewing them please write about what you think about the women depicted in the pictures if they were a client, peer and faculty member.

Prompt #3: Identify or reflect on what are expected qualities you hold for a female client, peer and faculty member.

Prompt #4: Please consider and identify two artifacts which represent your perceptions of women, one you embrace, and another you find offensive. Suggested artifacts might include song lyrics, pictures, stories, and media representations (e.g., commercials, television shows, movies), but you are welcome to share any type of artifacts you discover. Please journal about these articles or representations and how they influence you. Please bring the artifacts, if tangible, to the second interview. Lastly, please complete a summary statement regarding what it has been like for you being involved in this research project.



Informed Consent for Participation in Research  
University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty

Researcher: Jody Huntington, MA, NCC, LPC, Doctoral Student,  
Counselor Education and Supervision  
Phone Number: (303) 210-7008

I am researching male counseling student's perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. If you grant permission we will meet for a two interviews, the first interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes, and the second interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. We will meet in a quiet area on campus. I have some questions I would like to ask you, however, the interview is semi-structured, meaning I may ask a follow up question based on the information you provide or ask for clarification. Through the interview I am attempting to gain an understanding of your experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of females. In addition to the interviews, I will ask you to respond electronically to four journaling prompts.

I foresee no risks to participants beyond those that are normally encountered in a study of this nature. I will audiotape the interviews. Be assured that I will keep the contents of these tapes private. I will be utilizing a professional transcriptions service, and a confidentiality agreement will be secured between that company and me. To further help maintain confidentiality, computer files of information relating to our interaction will be created and names will be replaced by a pseudonym of your choosing. The names of participants will not appear in any professional report of this research.

Please feel free to phone me if you have any questions or concerns about this research and please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

---

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

APPENDIX E

Participant Recruitment Letter



Dear Graduate Counseling Program Coordinator:

Thank you in advance for your assistance. I am directing this correspondence to your attention because you were identified as the representative or coordinator for your institute's graduate program. My name is Jody Huntington. I am a Ph.D. candidate from the Department of Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Northern Colorado. I am currently recruiting participants for my dissertation study, which is supervised by Dr. Linda Black.

The purpose of this study is to explore male counseling student's perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. I am seeking participants for this study who are male, heterosexual, masters-level student currently enrolled in a graduate counseling program accredited by CACREP, and currently seeing clients either in a practicum or internship setting.

I would greatly appreciate if you would please forward this e-mail to all graduate, masters-level students in your counseling program. Additionally, after consultation with the student, you may nominate or encourage potential participants who fit the criteria for inclusion to contact me directly at [jhuntington@comcast.net](mailto:jhuntington@comcast.net). Depending on the response I receive from this correspondence, I may follow up with you in two weeks to gain further interest and participation in this study.

Thank you for your support, time, and effort in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jody L. Huntington, MA, NCC, LPC  
Ph.D. Candidate in Counselor Education and Supervision  
Department of Counselor Education and Supervision  
[jhuntington@comcast.net](mailto:jhuntington@comcast.net)  
303.210.7008

Linda L. Black, EdD, LPC  
Professor & Chair  
Department of Counselor Education and Supervision  
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences  
Department of Counselor Education and Supervision  
Campus Box 131  
University of Northern Colorado  
Greeley, CO 80639  
970.351.2731  
fax: 970.351.2625  
[linda.black@unco.edu](mailto:linda.black@unco.edu)

APPENDIX F

Approval and Revised Application for Expedited IRB Review

## Request for IRB Change

Submit this request and all attachments to Sherry May, IRB Administrator,  
Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, Suite #25

UNIVERSITY of  
NORTHERN COLORADO



Date of Original UNC IRB Approval: January 31, 2011

Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Women

Lead Investigator Name: Jody Huntington  
School: School of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education  
Email: jhuntington@comcast.net  
Phone: 303.210.7008

Research Advisor Name: Dr. Linda Black  
(if applicable) School: School of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education  
Email: Linda.Black@unco.edu  
Phone: 970.351.1638

On a separate page, describe and provide justification for the changes being proposed. Be concise and specific in describing methodological changes that affect the experience of participants and/or relate to the risks/benefits of participation. Explain why these changes are necessary.

Yes  No The proposed changes in protocol will necessitate changes in documents such as recruitment flyers, consent forms, debriefing forms, or other project-related documents.

Yes  No If yes, copies of the revised documents with changes highlighted are attached to this request.

### CERTIFICATION OF LEAD INVESTIGATOR

I certify that information contained in this request is complete and accurate.

Signature of Lead Investigator

Date

### CERTIFICATION OF RESEARCH ADVISOR (If Lead Investigator is a Student)

I certify that information contained in this request is complete and accurate.

Signature of Research Advisor

Date

Approved by:

Chairperson, Institutional Review Board

Date

SPONSORED  
PROGRAMS MAY 09 2011

Clear Form

Date Request Received by OSP: \_\_\_\_\_

April 28, 2011

Request for IRB Change

Huntington, Jody

On a separate page, describe and provide justification for the changes being proposed. Be concise and specific in describing methodological changes that affect the experience of participants and/or relate to the risks/benefits of participation. Explain why these changes are necessary.

Expand the potential pool of participants for the dissertation to include individuals who are not only in the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredited programs, but also programs which are CACREP equivalent or accredited by another professional body, such as the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) or equivalent. The reason for this change is there are a limited number of male graduate counseling students; students in equivalent programs would be similar to students in a CACREP program, thus the pool of students, potential participants would be larger.

Additionally, expand the geographic scope beyond the Rocky Mountain Region to solicit participants across the United States. With this change, depending on location, include the incorporation of the potential use of Skype or some video conferencing in lieu of face to face interviews. Again, this change would be to increase the pool of potential participants. The use of Skype or video conferencing could be used to decrease the time and cost of travel.



Application for Expedited IRB Review  
November 15, 2010  
Jody Huntington

## **F. Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to qualitatively explore male counseling student's perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. The problem under study is that gender issues continue to be avoided or understated in the counseling profession and hence women are likely to continue to suffer from the consequences of their personhood being either degraded or undervalued by all counselors, and in particular male counselors, given the patriarchal nature of U.S. society. Counselors are called to be advocates and models of social reform and consciousness. Both females and males can be freed from this artificial bind that has been put upon them in all realms of life. People educated and trained as counselors could be catalysts in the area of gender appreciation and agents of change in the area of gender oppression.

This study qualifies for expedited IRB review because no more than minimal risk to adult, human participants is present and collection of data, including voice, will be used for research purposes. No identifiers will link individuals to their responses and data will be collected in a normal university setting, or a private, professional location. Procedures outlined in the attached informed consent will be followed.

## **G. Methods**

### **1. Participants**

All participants will be over the age of 18 and will be male, self-identified as heterosexual, masters-level students currently enrolled in a graduate counseling program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), CACREP equivalent, or accredited by another professional body, such as the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) or equivalent, and currently seeing clients either in a practicum or internship setting. CACREP accredited programs, AAMFT accredited programs, or equivalents, are chosen to provide consistency across training and education requirements. The researcher will send program representatives an email containing a solicitation for participation, and request they send this out to all of their graduate, masters-level students. Program representative will also be invited to nominate individual or encourage those individual who may meet the participation criteria to contact the researcher directly. Depending on the response received from this correspondence, a follow up contact by the research may be taken in two weeks with the program representatives to gain further interest and participation in the study. This

correspondence sent to all students will include a description of the study, including information regarding participation, including interviews and journaling, and an invitation to participate. Within that description, will be the criteria stated above and contact information for qualified and interested participants to contact the researcher.

Participation will include a minimum of ten male graduate students, from accredited graduate counseling programs. This number is chosen as a minimum number of participants to get a broad enough perspective on the topic, participants will continue to be recruited beyond this number if data saturation has not been achieved, until a maximum number of fifteen participants have been recruited.

Participation in the proposed study will be optional and voluntary. Those who chose to participate will not receive any special recognition or compensation. Informed signed consent (see attached) will be collected from all who agree to participate in the study. Participants will be informed that participation in the study will be voluntary and may be terminated at any point at the request of the participant.

Informed Consent Attached

No special or vulnerable populations will be included in this study.

Participants will be contacted by the lead investigator following the initial analysis of the data to engage in member-checking of their transcripts and lead investigator derived codes. This process will be undertaken in order to triangulate data and ensure the intended meaning and context of participants' information has been captured.

## **2. Data Collection Procedures**

Participants will be selected by meeting the criteria set forth above, and will be recruited by the lead investigator through initial contact with program representatives. All participants will be willing volunteers who are interested in being a part of this project.

Once selected and permission and consent has been obtained, two interviews will be conducted. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face or via video conference at the participant's educational location, or a private, professional location. The first interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes, and the second interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The second interview will be scheduled at the end of the first interview for 60 days in the future. The time between the interviews will allow for follow up questions to emerge from data analysis, and for the data to be interpreted. The participants will engage in member checking of their data at the second interview as well as any needed

follow-up or clarifying questions. The initial interviews will be semi-structured, meaning other questions may be asked based on the information provided or clarification may be requested. Through the interview an attempt to gain an understanding of the participant's experience, thoughts, and perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty will be sought.

Between the two interviews the participants will be sent four journaling prompts via emails for their electronic journals. The first prompt will be sent one week following the first interview to elicit any further thoughts or feelings the participants may have regarding the first interview. The second prompt will be sent three weeks following the first interview. Participants will be asked to look at pictures from *Vogue* magazine and write about what they think about the women depicted in the pictures if they were a client, peer and faculty member. The third prompt, will be sent five weeks following the first interview and the participants will be asked to identify or reflect on what are expected qualities they hold for a female client, peer and faculty member. The fourth, and last prompt, will be sent one week prior to the second interview, and the participants will be asked to chose two artifacts which represent their perceptions of women, one they embrace, and another they find offensive. They will be asked to bring these artifacts, if possible, to the second interview. At which time, the researcher will discuss the meaning that the artifacts hold for the participants and document the artifacts via a digital picture. The meaning and nature of the artifacts will be considered data for this study.

Another contribution to the data set will be a researcher's journal. I will record my reflections immediately following the interviews. This will also be kept electronically and is considered to be part of the research database. No deceptive practices will be used during this research.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions Attached Appendix A

Journal prompts for participants Attached Appendix B

### **3. Data Analysis Procedures**

All data collected will be organized into an electronic database. The data includes the transcribed audio interview files, transcriptions of the interviews, participants and researcher's journals, and digital photos of artifacts. A holistic, narrative review and analysis of the data will be undertaken. The data will be reviewed to uncover broad categories, and then using the constant comparative method the data will be further distilled into patterns and themes based on similarities and uniqueness.

From the participant's data, common themes will be organized to tell their story regarding their perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. This information

can be utilized to inform further exploration and consideration related to feminist and social justice advocacy in counseling.

Auditors, persons who have published qualitative research, have experience and knowledge pertaining to gender issues, and have trained counselors, will be utilized to support the credibility of this study. The auditors will independently review two participant's transcripts, journal responses, artifact data, codes, and themes, for evidence of bias and over representation. Feedback from these independent reviews will be given to the researcher and any disagreement will be resolved via clarification and consensus. Additionally, a random check of two other participant's data will be performed by the auditors.

An audit trail, a documentation of the research process including challenges encountered and how themes emerged was also electronically maintained within the researcher's journal.

#### **4. Data Handling Procedures**

All interviews will be audio taped. The contents of the tapes will be kept private. To further help maintain confidentiality, computer files of information relating to the interviews will be created and names will be replaced by pseudonym identifiers selected by participants. Participant identification will be removed from any electronic communication between the researcher and the participant and stored under the chosen pseudonym. A professional transcription service, *Verbal Ink*, will be used for tape transcription; a client confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the transcription company will be obtained. The names of participants will not appear in any professional report of this research.

Confidentiality of the data obtained through this study will be maintained in the following ways:

- Individuals involved in the study will be known only to the researcher.
- Individuals will be allowed to select a pseudonym under which their data will be collected.
- Only the researcher, research advisor, and auditors will see and discuss the transcripts. The exception to this is the professional transcriptions service under contract with the researcher.
- Participants will be given written assurances of confidentiality.
- Interview data, audiotapes, and transcripts will be secured in a locked cabinet in the home office of the researcher. Informed consent forms will be kept in locked files in the research advisor's office. All data will be destroyed after five years.
- While confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, particularly with use of the internet, every attempt will be made to maximize privacy and protect the confidentiality of the source of the data.

**H. Risks, Discomforts and Benefits**

Consequences of participating in this study may include an increase in attention to gender awareness, and one's own values and beliefs related to gender. Also, participation in the interviews and journaling may cause physical and emotional fatigue. However, the process of journaling may be helpful in reducing this effect.

The benefit of participation in this study is the potential increase in understanding of the current state of counselor's ability to support an appreciation or oppression of feminist advocacy in counseling. The information may serve to further enhance or strengthen the field of counseling, particularly for females.

**I. Costs and Compensations**

The costs to individuals who agree to participate will be the time to participate in the interviews and journaling. The individuals will receive a summary of information gleaned from this research. No other compensation will be provided to participants.

**J. Grant Information**

Application for UNC Graduate Student Association – Graduate Research Grant will be submitted.

The following documents are attached:

- Copy of semi-structured interview questions to be covered
- Copy of participants' journal prompts
- Informed consent document

## APPENDIX B

## Interview Guide/Questions:

Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty

Pretext: I want to start off this interview by telling you that it is my belief that all individuals are influenced by gender and within our culture and individual environments each one of us has gender biases and beliefs, both conscious and unconscious.

## Interviewee Demographic Information:

Age:

Race or Ethnic Identity:

Have you completed a multicultural counseling course during your graduate studies?

Was gender a topic covered in this course?

How many students are in your program?

Of the clients you are currently seeing, what percentage is female and male?

Of your peers, what percentage is female and male?

Of your faculty, what percentage is female and male?

## Semi-structured interview questions:

1. Tell me what drew you to train as a counselor? What types of clients would you like to serve when you have completed your training?
2. I am interested in studying gender and the role it may or may not play in your perceptions of those around you; clients, peers, and faculty. Please describe for me the typical female client, peer and faculty member and the typical male client, peer and faculty member.
3. Now, based on those descriptions, to what degree do you perceive men and women to be similar? How are they different?
4. What cultural influences have impacted your perceptions about men and women?
5. What personal influences have impacted your perceptions about men and women?
6. What educational experiences have you had, at any level, that have impacted your perceptions of men and women?
7. How would you define the terms gender and gender roles? From your point of view, describe the gender roles for men and for women?
8. What role, if any, does gender play in counseling?
9. What makes a person attractive?
10. What makes a person competent?
11. In what way, if any, does one's attractiveness impact your view of their competence?

12. How do you decide whether or not a woman is attracted to you sexually?
13. I want to read you a scenario and ask you to respond to it: Assume we are sitting at a one-way mirror and three women walk in to the room we are viewing. The first is a young woman who is well dressed in a short skirt, stylish blouse, jewelry and high heels. She smiles at the one way mirror and sits down. Next, a second young woman walks in and she is wearing a pair of cargo shorts, a tee shirt, and flip flops. She, too smiles at the one way mirror and sits down. Finally, a third woman walks in and she is dressed in a pair of slacks and a blouse. She looks toward the mirror and smiles, and sits down.
  - a. What are your first impressions of these women in terms of intelligence, attractiveness, kindness?
  - b. Which of them would you be most likely to believe was a client, a peer, or a faculty member?
  - c. On what did you base your decisions?

## APPENDIX C

## Journal Prompts for Participants:

Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty

Prompt #1: Reflection on our initial interview a week ago, please journal about any additional thoughts or feelings you had following our time together, relating to what was discussed.

Prompt #2: Attached are pictures from *Vogue* magazine, after viewing them please write about what you think about the women depicted in the pictures if they were a client, peer and faculty member.

Prompt #3: Identify or reflect on what are expected qualities you hold for a female client, peer and faculty member.

Prompt #4: Please consider and identify two artifacts which represent your perceptions of women, one you embrace, and another you find offensive. Suggested artifacts might include song lyrics, pictures, stories, and media representations (e.g., commercials, television shows, movies), but you are welcome to share any type of artifacts you discover. Please journal about these articles or representations and how they influence you. Please bring the artifacts, if tangible, to the second interview. Lastly, please complete a summary statement regarding what it has been like for you being involved in this research project.





Informed Consent for Participation in Research  
University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: Male Counseling Student's Perceptions of Female Clients, Peers, and Faculty

Researcher: Jody Huntington, MA, NCC, LPC, Doctoral Student,  
Counselor Education and Supervision

Contact Information: (303) 210-7008; [jhuntington@comcast.net](mailto:jhuntington@comcast.net)

Research Advisor: Linda Black, EdD

Contact Information: (970) 351-1638; [Linda.Black@unco.edu](mailto:Linda.Black@unco.edu)

I am researching male counseling student's perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty. If you grant permission we will meet for a two face-to-face or video conference interviews, the first interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes, and the second interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. We will meet in a quiet area on campus, or a private, professional location. I have some questions I would like to ask you, however, the interview is semi-structured, meaning I may ask a follow up question based on the information you provide or ask for clarification. Through the interview I am attempting to gain an understanding of your experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of females. In addition to the interviews, I will ask you to respond electronically to four journaling prompts. These prompts and your responses to them are to gain further reflection and insight from you on the topic being researched. The four prompts will be sent to you at increments throughout the research process and you will be asked to respond to them within a week's time.

I foresee no risks to participants beyond those that are normally encountered in a study of this nature. I will audiotape the interviews. Be assured that I will keep the contents of these tapes private. I will be utilizing a professional transcriptions service, and a confidentiality agreement will be secured between that company and me. To further help maintain confidentiality, computer files of information relating to our interaction will be created and names will be replaced by a pseudonym of your choosing. While confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, particularly with use of the internet, every attempt

will be made to maximize privacy and protect the confidentiality of the source of the data. Any electronic communication received from you, the participant, or exchanged between you and me, the researcher, will be edited to remove your identifying information and stored under your chosen pseudonym. The names of participants will not appear in any professional report of this research.

Your participation in this study will remain strictly confidential. Beyond the researcher, research advisor, and auditors no one will be allowed to see or discuss any of your responses. The exception to this will be the professional transcription service which will be contracted and used by the researcher. To ensure your confidentiality, no identifying information is required on the transcripts; and the transcripts and signed consent form will be kept separately. All data will be kept in locked files in the researcher's home office and transcripts will be destroyed after five years; with the exception of the informed consent forms which will be kept in locked files in the research advisor's office.

Please feel free to phone me if you have any questions or concerns about this research and please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

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Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

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Participant Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

---

Date

APPENDIX G

Revised Participant Recruitment Letter



My name is Jody Huntington. I am a Ph.D. candidate from the Department of Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Northern Colorado. I am currently recruiting participants for my dissertation study, which is supervised by Dr. Linda Black.

The purpose of this study is to explore male counseling student's perceptions of female clients, peers, and faculty.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a male, heterosexual, masters-level student currently enrolled in a graduate counseling program accredited by CACREP, CACREP equivalent, or accredited by a professional body, such as AAMFT or equivalent program, and currently seeing clients either in a practicum or internship setting.

Your participation involves two face to face interviews or video conference with me. The first interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes, and the second interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The second interview will be scheduled at the end of the first interview for 60 days in the future. Between the two interviews you will be sent four journaling prompts via email to respond to as part of your data and participation. These prompts and your responses to them are to gain further reflection and insight from you on the topic being researched. The four prompts will be sent to you at increments throughout the research process and you will be asked to respond to them within a week's time.

Participation in the proposed study is optional and voluntary, and may be terminated at any point at your request. If you chose to participate you will not receive any special recognition or compensation. To further help maintain confidentiality, computer files of information relating to our interaction will be created and names will be replaced by a pseudonym of your choosing. The names of participants will not appear in any professional report of this research.

This study has been approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about the study, or would like to participate, please contact the principal investigator Jody Huntington by email at [jhuntington@comcast.net](mailto:jhuntington@comcast.net), or by phone at (303) 210-7008. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Linda Black, by email at [linda.black@unco.edu](mailto:linda.black@unco.edu) or by phone at (970) 351-1638.

Again thank you for your interest in this study. Your responses are greatly appreciated.

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