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VOICES OF MINORITY STUDENTS WITHIN MASTER'S LEVEL COUNSELOR
TRAINING PROGRAMS

by

Kirsten LaMantia

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Counseling

Idaho State University

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RE: Your application dated 10/31/2014 regarding study number 4179: Voices of Minority Students within Counseling Masters Programs

Dear Ms. LaMantia:

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Sincerely,

Ralph Baergen, PhD, MPH, QIP
Human Subjects Chair

DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

Voices of Minority Students within Master's Level Counselor Training Programs

Dissertation Abstract- Idaho State University (2015)

There is a dearth of information on the experiences and narratives of minority master's students within counselor education. Although limited quantitative research has been performed illuminating some of the issues minority students might face in higher education, counseling master's students have yet to be the focus of those studies. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of self-identified minority students within master's counseling programs. In order to gain deep understanding of the varied lived experiences a student may face, a qualitative inquiry and phenomenological methodology were enlisted. The meanings of the experiences were explored; therefore hermeneutic phenomenology was the best fit. The essential and incidental themes were: Past Trauma/Lived Experience/Minority Experiences, Support and Validation, Congruence/ Coming Out/ Being Open, Responsibility, Relationship with Minority Status, Cultural Norms, Expectations, and Quitting/ Questioning. Finally, the emergent themes and experiences of participants were told through the lens of an ethnodramatic play. The final product of this research may help counselor educators become informed about the specific needs and challenges their students face. In addition, the play may be able to be used within multicultural classes to provide a mirror for minority students and a learning opportunity for the class.

Chapter I

Introduction and Conceptual Context

Introduction and Literature Review

Minority students are not in the majority of the student population, meaning there is a much smaller chance of finding a mirror from whom they can derive support and hope (Barcus & Crowley, 2012; McWhirter, 1997; Ulloa & Herrera, 2006). Minority students may find it difficult to find a role model within colleges and universities. Researchers indicate racial and ethnic minority students are not seeking graduate studies at the same rate as non-minority students and a major contributor to this is lack of representation and integration (Ulloa & Herrera, 2006). Without mentors, classmates, or colleagues of similar minority status, students may be unaware of higher education opportunities and/or choose to forgo graduate school. Knowing that research indicates minority students are less likely to pursue higher education and when they do, they often lack support, leads to the question of what the experiences of minority students are within graduate programs. Studying minority counseling students may illuminate their experiences, but first a solid understanding of the term minority must be reached.

Studies of perceived discrimination of minority students have primarily utilized homogenous ethnic/racial or dichotomous ethnic/racial samples (Cokley, Hall-Clark, & Hicks, 2011). It is imperative to broaden the definition of minority away from simply race or ethnicity and start to include gender, sexual orientation, culture, physical ability, religion, spirituality, and so on (Astramovich & Harris, 2007; D'Andrea & Daniels, 2000). When the term minority is explored in a more holistic and relevant way, there is a better chance of expanding the existing research to represent more people, including

double or triple minorities in a convergence of identity referred to as intersectionality (Davis, 2008). Along with understanding the broad implication of the term minority, identity development models may be helpful in understanding the experiences of counseling master's students.

Identity development models indicate ethnic, racial, sexual, and gender minorities experience multiple transformative stages that contribute to attitudes and behaviors (Atkinson et al., 1997; Estrada & Rutter, 2006; Fassinger, 1991; Sue & Sue, 2003). Both the racial/cultural identity model of Atkinson et al. (1997) and model of lesbian/gay identity formation of Fassinger (1998) outline stages that imply both identity disturbance and synthesis as a component of minority development. During these formative developmental stages, someone with whom the minority can identify may prove to be a huge support and source of strength (Barcus & Crowley, 2012; McWhirter, 1997; Ulloa & Herrera, 2006). Exploring the experiences of minority students within master's counseling programs may prove to illuminate the specific struggles students may face.

Minority college students such as African American (Haizlip, 2012), female (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992), and LGBTQ identified people (Estrada & Rutter, 2006) face stressors due to underrepresentation, stigmatization, and lack of support. Double minority students such as individuals who identify as both a sexual and ethnic or racial minority experience a higher rate of stress than their double majority counterparts (Hayes, Chun-Kennedy, Edens, & Locke, 2011). Ethnic minority students experience loneliness at a higher rate than majority students and self-esteem may be directly effected by both intimate and social loneliness (McWhirter, 1997). Master's level counseling students who identify as minorities may feel as though they are isolated and unsupported

(Barcus & Crowley, 2012; McWhirter, 1997; Ulloa & Herrera, 2006). Being the only one (or at best one of a few) of a racial, ethnic, sexual, or gender minority within an entire counseling program may create a sense of loneliness (McWhirter, 1997).

Minority students within higher education may experience various forms of cultural incompetence from faculty members such as microaggressions in the classroom, asking students to present in a “White” manner, or the lack of diversity issues within the curriculum (Barcus & Crowley, 2012). When faced with educational experiences directly related to minority status, some students may feel vulnerable and be hesitant to address issues with professors (Barcus & Crowley, 2012). Without the safety of addressing culturally insensitive issues with faculty or peers, minority students may feel they are lacking support. The purpose of this study is to serve as a method of illuminating these students’ lived experiences in order to give voice to an otherwise potentially isolated perspective. This research might help program faculty create methods for helping those students who experience loneliness and isolation.

Terminology. When exploring the experiences of minority students, a solid definition of minority must be reached. Casas (1987) explained the term racial and ethnic minority counseling was “simplistically defined as any counseling relationship in which the client is a member of a racial or ethnic minority group and the counselor a member of the majority group” (p. 277). However, Casas continues with the argument the definition of racial and ethnic minority counseling should “encompass more accurately and comprehensively the relationships between counselors and clients who are of a different racial ethnic and/or social-cultural background” (p. 277). Therefore, it can be

surmised that Casas believed the term minority should be broadened from simply societal numbers to that of perception and felt difference.

Black and Stone (2005) echoed Casas' (1987) appeal and moved beyond gender, race, and ethnicity to a more encompassing view of minorities and privilege. They argued that, although race and gender play a huge role in oppression within the United States, it is important to include more cultures that are oppressed and underprivileged. A broadening of the definition minority is important for two reasons: A person may choose not to identify with 'minority' due to stigmatization of the term and as the population within the United States continues to shift, numerical minorities may become numerical majorities, however, without the privilege and power that comes with the traditional White, male, heterosexual, middle class, Christian majority (Black & Stone, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2008).

It might behoove research about minority students to allow students to define the term minority into context of their own experiences. Within counselor education research, there is a dearth of information on student-identified minority standing. The experiences of ethnic minority counseling students have been explored (Atkinson, 1983; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; McNeill, Hom, & Perez, 1995; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 2001) with a general consensus that ethnic minority students may experience greater stress and academic displeasure. Research about gender minority counseling students has found similar results (Comstock, Duffey, & St. George, 2003; Hoffman, 1996). In addition, research has been provided pertaining to international students enrolled in counseling programs (Ng, 2006). Within existing research about ethnic, sexual, gender, and nationality minorities, intersectionality, the crossroads of two or more

minority statuses, within counseling students has not yet been researched within counselor education. Since so little is known about the identity development and experience of counseling minority students this dissertation will encompass the experiences of a multitude of minority counseling students. Most important, the participants of the study will define the term “minority” on an individual basis. It is expected for some students to delineate the term minority in the traditional/societal sense, while others may feel as though they are a minority within their program due to the program’s unique make-up. With no research on the experiences of various forms of the term minority and students who identify as a range of statuses within counselor education, this study will be the first of its kind.

Minority students within counselor education. Research on the experience of traditionally termed minority students within counselor education is limited. Some research has been conducted about ethnic, sexual, gender minority, and international students within counseling master’s programs. The experiences of intersectionality and programmatic minorities have not been explored specifically within counseling master’s programs. Exploring singular minority experiences may help in understanding the intended research as some participants may identify as a minority due to a singular status while others may identify as multiple intersections of minority statuses.

Racial and ethnic minority counseling students. One of the first research studies to seek out representation of ethnic minority counseling students was written nearly thirty-five years ago. Ethnic minority students were not the participants in the study; instead, the departmental chairpersons were asked about the demographics of their departments. Atkinson (1983) found Black and Hispanic students were underrepresented

as students and they were “more likely to be enrolled part-time” (p. 7). A more recent study found African American students are enrolled in master’s programs at a higher rate than ever before; however, they are not being recruited or retained as counselor educators (Haizlip, 2012). This finding is surprising because the representation of African-American counseling doctoral students is proportionate to the percentage of African-Americans within the United States (Johnson et al., 2007). However, McNeill, Hom, & Perez (1995) found ethnic and racial minority counseling students are not receiving adequate supervision and, in fact, are experiencing “discrimination, isolation, racism, and differential treatment resulting in feelings of confusion, anger, outrage, and discouragement” (p. 254). Ethnic minority students seek similar minorities as advisors and mentors, but with fewer Faculty of Color, students might not find the support that they need (Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). In addition, ethnic minority faculty help recruit ethnic minority counseling master’s students, which may cause a problematic cycle since there are so few of these faculty members (Bemak et al., 2011). As the definition of minority can move beyond race and ethnicity, sexual orientation is one way in which students may identify as a minority within their programs.

Sexual minority counseling students. Much has been written about the need to incorporate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) competencies into counselor education (ex. Carroll & Gilroy, 2002; Dillon et al., 2004; Graham, Carney, & Kluck, 2012; Kocarek & Pelling, 2003; Rutter, Estrada, Ferguson, & Diggs, 2008); however, the existing research works from the assumption the counseling master’s students identify as heterosexual. Currently, there are no specific articles exploring the experience of LGBTQ students in counseling master’s programs. Applied psychology

has limited research surrounding the topic of sexual minority students within counseling psychology and psychology programs (Lark & Croteau, 1998). Although there is a complete dearth of information of the experiences of sexual minority counseling students, there is some research of gender minority students.

Gender minority counseling students. Although men make up a sparse 10% of the American Counseling Association's professional membership (Carey, 2011), there is still a disparity with the privilege men are given over women (Sue & Sue, 2008). Some male students may think they are the minority due to the lower numbers of males in counseling programs, while women, transgender, and gender nonconforming students may feel as though they are the minority due to the lack of privilege afforded to them. Comstock, Duffey, & St. George (2003) utilized a student's narrative as a part of their research. The student articulated the fear and silencing that occurred in a counseling classroom that was intended to explore gender. Daniluk et al. (1995) reflected upon their own training experiences and hypothesized female counseling students may feel stifled and silenced if there is an apparent hierarchy within a mixed-gendered team-teaching classroom, while male students may feel attacked for systemic issues of female oppression. In addition, students may not be learning about both male and female issues within their counseling courses which may cause students to have a "restricted (and restrictive) view of gender" (Daniluk et al., 1995, p. 108) thus further alienating gender minority students.

Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) quantitatively studied the perceptions of the impact of gender on counseling master's students. They found women, when compared to males, experience more stress, anxiety, depression, "inadequate financial resources and

lower quality of leisure time, as well as less communication and cohesion support” (p. 720). Women also experienced their counseling program as rigid, unsupportive, and they had insufficient relationships with other students, resulting in women feeling as though they were isolated within their program (Mallinckrodt and Leong, 1992).

Based on the existing research, women have a less optimal experience within their graduate counseling studies (Comstock, Duffey, & St. George, 2003; Daniluk et al., 1995; Mallinckrodt and Leong, 1992). Although there are limited data on the experiences of gender minorities within counselor training programs, there is a complete lack of research about transgender and gender-nonconforming students. Much of the research that does exist about gender minorities tend to use dichotomous gender binary terms such as “both genders” (Walker, 2006, p. 67). Clearly there is an opportunity to research the experiences of gender-non-conforming counseling students. Moving from race and ethnicity, sexuality, and gender, the next minority that can be explored is a convergence of all of the above as well as international counseling students.

International counseling students. International students were enrolled in nearly half (41%) of the counseling programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (Ng, 2006). This finding exemplifies the prevalence of nationality-minority students within counseling master’s programs which speaks to the need for a better understanding of the experience of international students within counseling programs. International students may also be considered “minorities among themselves” due to their decision to pursue the Western occupation of counseling (Ng, 2006, p. 28). In addition, expected counselor characteristics are vastly different among different cultures, for example, Asian

Americans seeking counseling “prefer problem-solving over insight-oriented psychotherapy” (Mau & Jepsen, 1988, p. 189). There is a generalized push for the client to create their own change, insight, and growth within Western counseling (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Throughout the literature available within counselor education that delves into the specific issues ethnic, sexual, gender minorities, and international students may face, it is important to keep in mind that although there may be commonalities among persons within a particular minority, each individual will have a unique lived experience. This mindset is also important when exploring various identity models, although helpful in learning various issues some people may face. Sue and Sue (2008) explained the need to look at the culture of a person as well as their individual needs by stating, “The erroneous belief that all Asians are the same, all Blacks are the same, all Hispanics are the same, or all American Indians are the same has led to numerous therapeutic problems” (p. 235). Racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, and national students may find themselves as a minority within their counseling master’s programs. Therefore, it may be beneficial to explore their experiences through the lens of identity development.

Identity development models. Identity development models are utilized to investigate the various stages different groupings of people may endure (Sue & Sue, 2008). In the context of self-identified minority counseling master’s students, it may be helpful to explore some of the various identity models in order to exemplify the need to understand their experiences. As participants in this study may identify within an array of minority options, racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation identity development models will be examined. Each individual identity model will then be correlated to

Comstock et al.'s (2003) Relational Model of Development, which will be the singular identity development model by which each participant can be understood. As expanded upon in further sections, Comstock et al.'s model will be used due to its universality and ability to be valid for minority, majority, and intersectional students.

Racial identity development. Racial identity development models were first created in the 1960's to "understand the Black experience in the United States" (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999, p. 41). Cross (1971, 1995) was one of the first to develop a Black identity model, which he termed Nigrescence (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). The Cross model had five stages of identity development for Black Americans: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and finally internalization-commitment (1971, 1995). Pre-encounter is exhibited by Black Americans devaluing their Blackness while valuing White American norms. Challenging the previous White view of the world and beginning to re-examine the world marks the encounter stage, which is often precipitated by an event. Next, the Black person will withdraw from the dominant White culture and retreat to an entirely Black worldview. As the person's old and new identities begin to synthesize, internalization begins. Last, the Black American will become aware of racial injustices and therefore becomes more social justice-minded. Cross' model helped shape many of the identity models that followed it (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Two other identity development models are similar to Cross' in that they each have five stages by which a racial minority person may advance. Kim's (1981) Asian American Identity Development Model and Ruiz's (1990) Latino American Identity Development Model utilize a process similar to Cross. All three racial identity models

begin with a disjointed worldview whereby the racial minority believes they are aligned with the majority White culture. Through the various stages, all the models end with an incorporation or synthesis stage in which the person accepts and values their racial identity.

Ethnic identity development. Ethnicity and cultural identity development models are very similar to racial identity models and some are used interchangeably. However, as Sue and Sue (2008) explained, not all people from the same race will experience the same identity development, partly depending on their ethnic or cultural identity. For example, Kim's (1981) Asian American Identity Development Model might speak well to a Chinese American's process while it might not address the individual experiences of a Pakistani American.

Phinney (1989, 1993, 2007) developed a three-stage ethnic identity model that did not specifically define an ethnicity and instead used broad language that could be defined to various ethnic minorities. Although this model was initially used to describe an adolescent's ethnic identity development, it can be transferred to adults as well (Sue & Sue, 2008). The three stages in Phinney's (1989, 1993, 2007) ethnic identity development model are unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search, and ethnic identity achievement. Unexamined ethnic identity is when people have yet to explore their personal ethnicity and either take cues from their family unit regarding how to act, or simply do not view themselves as ethnic beings. Ethnic identity search is often incited by the person experiencing discrimination or an event that causes them to reflect on their own ethnicity and culture and is characterized by an exploration of ethnic education. The

third stage, ethnic identity achievement, occurs when the person accepts their ethnic and cultural identity.

Sexual identity development. Cass (1979) developed one of the first sexual identity models. Although it has been contested among various subsections of sexual minorities (Degges-White, Rice, & Myers, 2000), it is the most common and affirmative (Frable, 1997) model and will therefore be explored. Cass' model has 6-stages: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. Identity confusion is when the person begins to question their sexuality. Identity comparison "is marked by a tentative commitment to the homosexual self" (Degges-White, Rice, & Myers, 2000, p. 319). Also in this second stage, the person begins to feel isolated from the majority (heterosexuals) and discriminated against causing the person to try to deny their homosexual self. Identity tolerance begins when the person starts to consider identifying as gay and may seek out the support of other sexual minorities. Identity acceptance is when the identity of being gay starts to feel normal. Identity pride develops as the person proudly identifies as gay while still acknowledging the prejudice against sexual minorities that exists among society. Finally, identity synthesis occurs when the person successfully integrates their homosexual identity with other aspects of their personhood. Identity development models have tended to explore the experiences of one specific grouping of people. For the purposes of this study, it is important to find an identity development model that can be utilized among a vast array of people in order to have a consistent standard of exploration for each participant's level of development.

Comstock et al.'s (2003) relational model of gender awareness development.

Exploring racial, ethnic, and sexual minority development, a commonality among the stages becomes clear – the process begins with ignorance of systemic oppression and privilege, starts to grow due to a moment of clarity, and results in a more congruent person. Comstock, Duffey, and George (2003) have a gender awareness model that is similar to the previously explored racial, ethnic, and sexual minority identity development models. This model is different from others due to the opportunity within it to reject growth and its emphasis on relationships. Comstock et al. (2003) stated, “this model is intended to provide counselor educators and students alike with a perspective that will normalize this process and promote creative thinking for facilitating growth and communication” (p. 68). For those reasons, this is the model I consulted as I continued the research process and tried to gain an understanding of my participants. In addition, for the purposes of this study, the model will be referred to as Comstock et al.'s (2003) Relational Model.

Comstock et al.'s (2003) Relational Model was created to explore the process of gender awareness development; however, the five stages are based on the Relational Cultural Model and are able to be interchanged with various minority identities (Comstock et al., 2003). The stages within the model are already divided between the process of development in men and women. The study does not address gender-nonconforming or transgender people. The first stage is *exposure*, in which women and men are exposed to gender scholarship and gender privilege. The next stage is *dissonance*. In this stage, men (the people with the privilege) may feel angry about their perception of being falsely accused of being sexist. Women, on the other hand, are angry

because they are exploring their own oppression for perhaps the first time. The third stage is either *identification* or *denial*, depending on how the person chooses to make meaning of their newfound knowledge. During this stage, women either enter identification where they begin to explore the gender roles society has assigned them and the harm those roles may have caused, or they enter denial where they refuse to accept that gender roles, society, and culture have attributed to oppression. Men during the identification stage begin to accept that gender roles were created to help men maintain power and may cause men to start to fight against their own preconceived notions of gender. However, men may enter denial where they are unwilling to accept that gender impacts oppression and power. In women and men, identification can lead to catharsis (processing feelings of anger and guilt), while denial can lead to rejection (denying gender scholarship). The fourth stage is *connection*. Women and men in this stage will begin to experience healing. They will start to explore the reconciliation of their gender, its impact, and their choices in gender roles and interactions. Last, *integration* is an ongoing process in which both women and men experience “a deepening of personal meanings, awareness, and enlightenment that comes from a commitment to change, and possibly, social justice” (Comstock et al., 2003, p. 70).

Comstock et al.’s (2003) Relational Model of Gender Awareness Development described the processes that both the group in power and the minority group may experience when faced with education about privilege. The five steps outlined within are comparable to other identity development models; however, Comstock et al.’s model appears to be more universal due to its foundational rooting in Relational Cultural Theory (Comstock et al., 2003). To its credit, the model works well when exploring

intersectionality because it embraces the mixture of minority and majority within a singular participant. For example, a participant may identify with the majority racially while identifying with the minority sexually. This model can then be used to explore the participant's multiple identities. As this dissertation's study unfolds, the use of the Relational Model of Development may be helpful in understanding the development of both societal minority students and students who identify as a majority in society and a minority within their counseling program. The model is depicted in Figure 1 in order to have a pictorial representation of the development model.

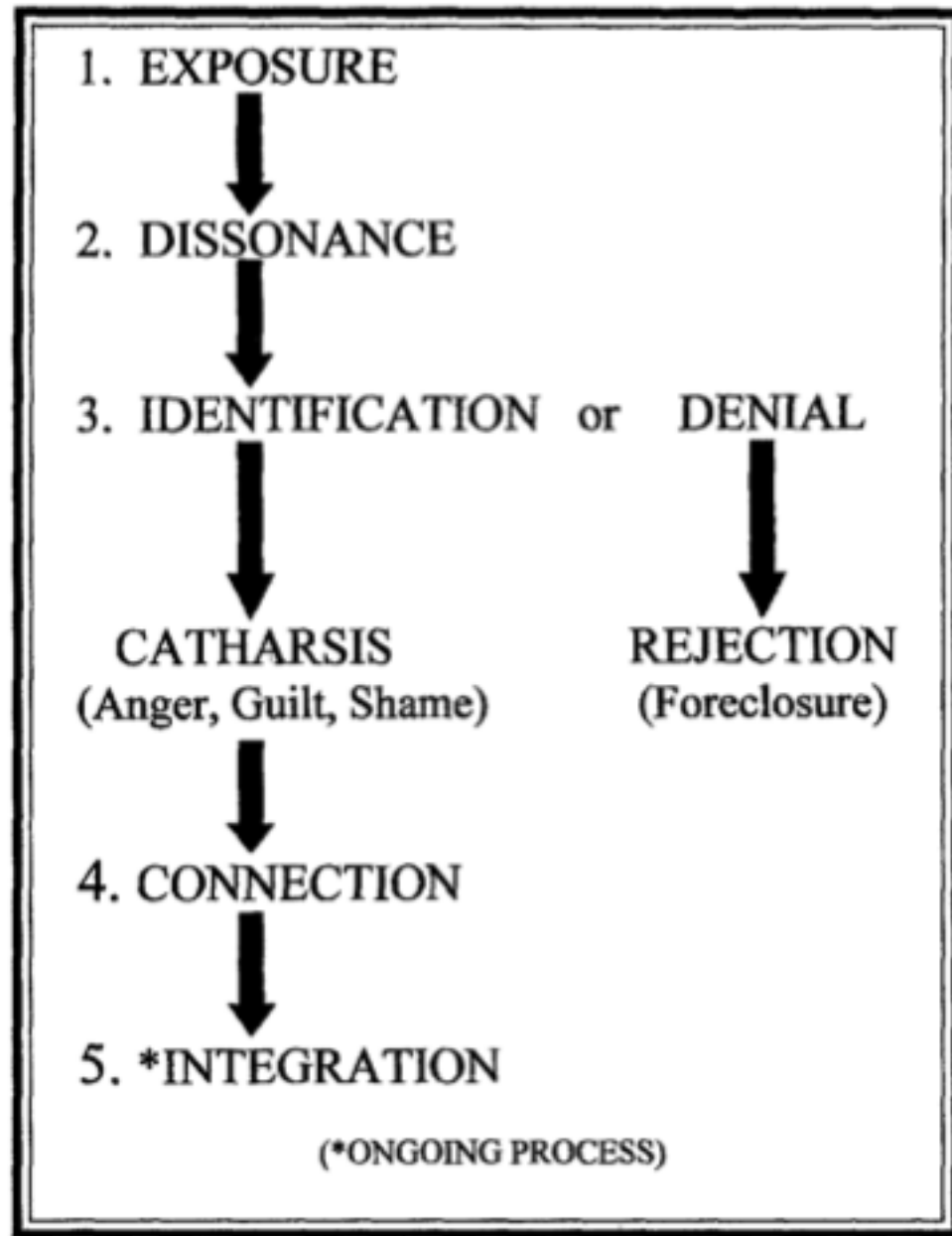


Figure 1. Comstock et al.'s (2003) Relational Model of Gender Awareness Development (p. 68)

My Personal Interest as the Researcher

I look up to people who are projective mirrors of my ideal self. I find myself seeking out those who exemplify qualities that I wish I possessed. Often there is at least a fundamental similarity among the esteemed and myself, whether it is gender, sexual

orientation, culture, or sense of humor. I can measure myself against these people while reflecting on my own strengths and areas in which to grow. It is when I am struggling to find an effective mirror of myself that I begin to succumb to loneliness and self-doubt. Without a positive projection of who I can strive to be, it is almost as if a part of me is lost.

Moving to Idaho from Chicago to attend Idaho State University was an incredibly unique experience. As an out, gay, masculine of center, heavily tattooed, atheist woman who had lived within a liberal urban environment her whole life, I found myself completely out of my element in rural Idaho. The town was small. There was only one gay bar in all of southeast Idaho. Public transportation was meager. There was little racial diversity. And hardest of all, the culture surrounding my university did not appear to be LGBTQ friendly. I have sought out mirrors of myself who could identify with my struggles and fears. Although constantly surrounded by counselors, there were times I felt utterly alone and unheard. Fortunately for me, however, I had been in situations such as these before. I could draw upon my learned and innate strengths in order to create a supportive community that loved and accepted me. I knew I would be okay.

In addition, I began to hear from master's students who were White, middle class, Christian, and heterosexual, thereby falling into a majority standing, who did not identify with the prominent religion present in Idaho State University's counseling program. For the first time in these typically majority students' lives, they were part of the "other." These students expressed feeling like they did not know how to remain congruent to their own opinions or make connections within their cohort. By identifying as a minority

within their program, they began to question their place within the social microcosm of their counseling program.

Students who have been within a societal minority status throughout their life may have developed coping skills. But what about the minority students in counseling programs who did not have the same learned resiliency? What if a student had been in the majority their entire lives until they arrived at their master's program? Did racial or ethnic minorities have similar experiences to mine? Or were they completely different? What are the stories and experiences that minority students can tell about their time in their master's programs? My curiosity is peaked. I want to explore the experiences of other minority students while working to create unity and a network of mirrors by which minority students may gain support and counselor educators may gain insight into identity development of minority counseling students.

Minority Narratives

As outlined in the previous sections, a significant amount of research on minority experiences is quantitatively conducted, meaning the narratives of experiences have not been thoroughly explored. It is important for the stories of minority counseling students to be expressed. Haizlip (2012) stated that one way to bridge the gap between people of color and counselor education is "Counselor educators should solicit feedback about students' experiences in counselor education— particularly if the faculty is predominantly White" (p. 217). Thus, a study that solicits feedback from various forms of self-identified minority counseling students will be a significant addition to the counselor education literature.

The quotes that can be gleaned from existing research indicate the need for counselor educators to be aware of the unique issues that may exist for minority students. Some minority students within the study experienced biased faculty supervision. A doctoral-level marriage and family therapist international student quoted her supervisor as stating:

“Let me tell you what the dilemma is. I refer you to a client and tell them you are an excellent therapist, then I tell them your name. And they think ‘ooh, I cannot even say that name.’ Let’s say they get past your name and they call you, they realize you have an accent, you are from a different country, and think what will you understand about their culture?” (Mittal & Wieling, 2006, p.377).

In a qualitative study about minority counselor educators, one African American female stated students did not accept her due to her race, “Students would question me and then go and ask someone else that looked more like them” (Shillingford, Trice-Black, & Butler, 2013, p. 260). This might parallel the experiences of Students of Color in their counseling programs.

An African American counselor education doctoral student explained that she felt alone and that her experience was dismissed within her program. She stated:

“I can honestly say that this department does not do enough to be supportive of their minority students. I don’t even know if collectively this is something they care a whole lot about. I’m really vocal and I have let it be known to faculty, our dean, our department chair, and program coordinator that the diversity and the lack of attentiveness to this when I entered the program is in my exact words ‘unacceptable’” (Henfield, Owens, & Witherspoon, 2011, p. 235).

Again, this person’s narrative is reflective of some of the struggle a minority student may face, however, a doctoral student may have different experiences than a master’s student. In addition, this study only sought perspectives from African American doctoral students rather than generalized minority students. Jernigan, Green, Helms, Perez-Gualdron, and Henze (2010) explored psychology students of color who were in

supervision dyads with supervisors of color. One student explained the struggle of being a student of color in a predominately White institution:

“My supervisor strongly encouraged all supervisees of color to participate in the clinic-wide diversity committee. When I declined the invitation, my supervisor expressed curiosity... as he had experienced that as one of the most effective ways of educating White people about and working through racism. I acknowledged the utility of this approach as *one* way to promote an understanding of race, but maintained my perspective that previous experience with institutional diversity initiatives in predominantly White settings placed me in the position of teaching White people about race and racism... [which was] too psychologically and emotionally draining for me. My supervisor laughed and responded, ‘I don’t know what they are doing to you all over at [the supervisee’s university].’ I felt like he was mocking me and disparaging my training program” (pp. 67-69).

The pressure of being the minority while teaching the majority about race and privilege may be a struggle that master’s counseling students also face. Some studies explored the various identifiers one person may attribute regardless of societal views on minority status. A social work supervisor who was working with supervisees of different cultures stated:

“I realized I take my identity from many different groups. My gender identity is first and most absolute, and that is female. The rest is not as absolute for me. I am Caucasian but not completely identified with being a White American. I am a second generation American yet still identify very strongly with the values and attitudes of my east European Jewish grandparents who saw themselves as a persecuted minority” (Young, 2004, p. 44).

This woman’s quote speaks to the opportunity of vast exploration in allowing self-identified minority students to participate in this study. People identify in a vast array of ways and a study that allows unique identities does not currently exist within counselor education.

These studies focus either on one component of the term minority or on an experience other than that of master’s counseling students; therefore, lacking among existing qualitative research studies is a fluid narrative among various kinds of

counseling minority students. People within the helping professions, whether students, supervisees, or supervisors, experience unique and important struggles. A qualitative study that explores the narratives of different self-identified minority counseling master's students will help close the gap within current scholarship.

Purpose and Significance of Study

As clearly expressed through the literature review, there is a complete dearth of information on the experiences and narratives of minority master's students within counselor education. Although limited quantitative research has been conducted illuminating some of the issues minority students might face in higher education, counseling master's students have yet to be the focus of those studies. The purpose of this study is to illuminate those experiences through an in-depth qualitative exploration in order to give voice to students who identify as a minority and may have otherwise been unheard. There is inherent value in counselor educators understanding the perspectives and experiences of their students. Interviewing self-identified minority students, exploring their lived experiences, and constructing a fluid narrative will fill a gap in counselor education literature.

Methodology

Qualitative Approach Rationale: A Phenomenological Ethnodrama

A qualitative approach to exploring the experience of self-identified minority students was taken. Qualitative research is the most appropriate method due to the goal of learning from individual participants about their narrative stories as minority counseling students. Hermeneutic phenomenology works to delve deeply into the perceived experience of the participant and was therefore be utilized in order to ascertain

the full narrative of the participants (van Manen, 1990). In addition, once themes are discovered throughout participant interviews, the phenomenological research was expressed through an ethnodramatic script (Saldaña, 2003; 2011). The experiences of minority counseling students were represented through a rich storytelling of multiple characters in order to provide minority students a mirror of their own reality while also providing counselor educators and majority students a glimpse into the lives of their peers. The next chapter will address, in full detail, the methodology of this study.

Future Implications

After this research project, the greater implications for this study may be numerous. As will be discussed thoroughly in later sections, the methodology used resulted in a script. The script can be used as an educational tool in cultural classes as a prompt for open discussion. It may also serve as a mirror for students who do not have the resources or ability to find personal similarities in the majority. In addition, there may be specific benefits for the participants in this study in having their stories presented as artistic expression.

In a study of an elementary school pupil and professional co-constructed theater program working to promote healthy eating and self-image behaviors, one of the biggest benefits for the students was seeing their work on stage. Haines, Neumark-Sztainer, and Morris (2008) stated that, “The children also discussed how being involved in the development process [of the play] resulted in a play that used situations that were more salient to them and, therefore, possibly more effective in changing their behavior” (p. 247). Although the production of the play is yet to be determined, the participants would be free to have copies of the script, video of or tickets to the final play. If loneliness and

stress due to isolation is evident for minority students, then it can be hypothesized that the act of helping create an expressive work of art could be beneficial for the students to be interviewed.

Chapter II

Methodology

Ethnic, sexual, gender minority, and international students within counseling master's programs experience unique challenges (Atkinson, 1983; Comstock, Duffey, & St. George, 2003; Hoffman, 1996; Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 2001; Mau & Jepsen, 1988; McNeill, Hom, & Perez, 1995; Ng, 2006, 2006). Although specific minority populations within counseling programs have been studied, their individual and in-depth experiences have not been told. In addition, persons who identify with multiple minority statuses as well as people who fall into a minority within the makeup of their counseling program have not been studied at all.

The goal of this study was to explore the lived experiences of self-identified minority counseling students. Utilizing qualitative inquiry and engaging in the creation of a hermeneutic phenomenological ethnodrama thematically expressed individual narratives in a way that can better inform counselor educators about the experiences of master's students. With gained knowledge, counselor educators may begin to better support minority students and encourage multicultural development.

Qualitative Method: A Phenomenological Ethnodrama

A qualitative approach was the most conducive method by which the research question, "What is the lived experience of self-identified minority counseling students?" could be answered. Qualitative research works to explore various narratives allowing for multiple truths based on experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moving beyond a broad representation of experience, qualitative methodology seeks to find a deep understanding of a person's reality (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within qualitative

research, both phenomenology and ethnodrama can be utilized to explore the experience of the participants and present experiences in a fluid and meaningful manner.

Phenomenology. I believe understanding deep meaning, the lived experience, the moment, the story, or the perceptions of an event can lead to a greater understanding of a reality formed among people. I am curious about others' experiences as minority students in master's programs. The need to know about the participants' lived experiences determines phenomenology as the appropriate research method (van Manen, 2007). Van Manen (2007) explains, "Not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze toward the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sedimentations—and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect" (p. 11). Van Manen's comparison of poet to researcher extends to my own identity as an artist and an academic. I am interested in truly understanding the meaning of the lived experiences of minority students.

As I explored the experiences of minority students, I began to understand the commonalities among people who feel different than the others within a counseling program. Phenomenology works to describe "the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Beyond simply stating the experience, *hermeneutic* phenomenology adds an extra element by searching for the meaning within lived experiences (Davidson, 2014; van Manen, 2007). Kakkori (2009) explained, "Phenomenology is usually described as studying the essence, and hermeneutics as

studying the processes of interpretation... phenomenology is concerned with finding the essence of the things, whereas hermeneutics sees that everything has its being in language and interpretation.” (pp. 19-20). Hermeneutics has historically been used as a method by which scholars interpret Biblical and religious text and it has more recently been used by scholars like van Manen to explore human sciences and education (Kakkori, 2009).

Although the understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology is evolving and does not remain stationary, there is general consensus on the ideology of hermeneutic phenomenology (Lavery, 2003).

The primary goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is “toward illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding” (Lavery, 2003, p. 7). The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is accomplished by examining written transcripts of participant interviews and then ‘isolating themes’ (Sloan & Bowe, 2013; van Manen, 1997); “the themes can be viewed as written interpretations of lived experience... Having isolated phenomenal themes, one rewrites the theme while interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon or lived experience” (Sloan & Bowe, 2013, p. 1292). The process of finding themes in the experiences within participant interviews is phenomenological. The exploration of the meaning behind the themes is hermeneutics.

There are six research activities that are employed in Hermeneutic

Phenomenology:

- “1.) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- 2.) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- 3.) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- 4.) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- 5.) manipulating a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;

6.) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole” (van Manen, 1990, pp. 30-31).

By using the method delineated by van Manen (1990) and coding process described by Sloan and Bowe (2013), both outlined above, the process of creating this hermeneutic phenomenological study was as follows. Step one “turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30): the phenomenon I researched was the experience of minority students within master’s counseling programs. My personal interest as a gay woman in counselor education and my commitment to social justice has led me to become more interested in the experiences of minorities in master's programs. Step two “investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30): I conducted interviews with self-identified minority students who were currently within their master’s programs. They were living in the experience versus recalling their perceptions of past experiences. Step three “reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30): After participant interviews, I explored the themes that were occurring within and among the students through the transcripts. I searched for text that exemplified the experience of being a minority within a counseling master’s program. Step four “describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30): I began writing the themes and interpreting the meaning behind them (Sloan & Bowe, 2013). I wrote the themes and then explored the meaning behind them with the participants. I then rewrote the themes to more accurately portray the experiences of the participants. I was also engaged in the process of writing the ethnodrama play which was a product of writing and rewriting in order to catch the true essence of the characters and phenomenon. Step five “manipulating a strong and

oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990, p. 31): With the help of participants, I chose the most relevant essential themes that were reoccurring through the experiences of being a minority student within a master’s counseling program. We co-constructed a well-rounded and thorough interpretation of the meaning of their experiences and then I related the newfound themes to the identity development models outlined in Chapter One. This helped tie the phenomenon to informative relations. Step six “balancing the research context by considering parts and whole” (van Manen, 1990, p. 31): Within this dissertation, I thoroughly examined the overarching themes of the experience as well as the individualized experiences and the meaning behind them. This allowed for an appropriate balance between the parts and the whole. In addition, I wrote an ethnodrama based on individual experiences that were relevant to the overall themes of participants. This served as an artistic representation of the balance between each individual participant and the commonalities within the phenomenon of being a minority student within a master’s counseling program.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was the research method that best assisted in learning about the experiences of minority counseling master’s students. Beyond this method, an ethnodrama methodology was also utilized. Hermeneutic phenomenology coupled with ethnodrama produced a solid understanding of the individual stories and common themes among participants.

Ethnodrama. Johnny Saldaña (2003) defined ethnodrama as, “the script, consists of analyzed and dramatized significant selections from interview transcripts, field notes, journal entries, or other written artifacts” (p. 218). Due to theatre’s potency, expression, creativity, and “reflective engagement,” ethnodrama works to create

immediate discourse among its audience by imparting knowledge in a more powerful and effective manner (Gallagher, 2007). Performed research works to allow the audience to experience the “other” in a deeper sense (Conquergood, 1985). As mentioned previously, the experiences and stories of minority master’s students in counseling master’s programs have not been told. By enlisting ethnodrama, there was a greater chance people would be impacted by the research produced. Using artistic expression of minority students’ lived experiences to create immediate dialogue among audience members is a major benefit of this methodology.

The process of creating this ethnodrama utilized the Hermeneutic Phenomenological interviews I collected to create characters and monologues and compile them into a well-rounded and fluid script. The script was created by a “combination of meaningful life vignettes, significant insights, and epiphanies. This process generates the material from which the structure and content - its plot and story line - are constructed” (Saldaña, 2003, p. 221). Participant dialogue The emergent themes and story lines determined the plot and character list of the play.

Ethical Considerations of Ethnodrama

By utilizing ethnodrama, lived experiences of participants could be performed. Kathleen Gallagher (2007) explained that ethically it is imperative for participants to understand that the performances of qualitative research are “respectful forgeries and faithful betrayals” (p. 105). Characters created for the script and actor portrayals inevitably differed from the people on whom they are based. Participants needed to be fully informed, although their experiences may be used within the context of the play, the story and characterization may be very different than their perceived self-image. Art is

subjective and there is always a chance an audience will make meaning of a play in a way the playwright or researcher did not intend (Gallagher, 2007). Due to these considerations, securing participant permissions is crucial (Saldaña, 2011) and was included explicitly in the informed consent for the study.

Dwight Conquergood (1985) explored the moral and ethical implications of ethnodrama. He created four domains of ethical pitfalls: The Custodian's Rip-Off, The Enthusiast's Infatuation, The Skeptic's Cop-Out, and The Curator's Exhibitionism, as displayed in Figure 2.

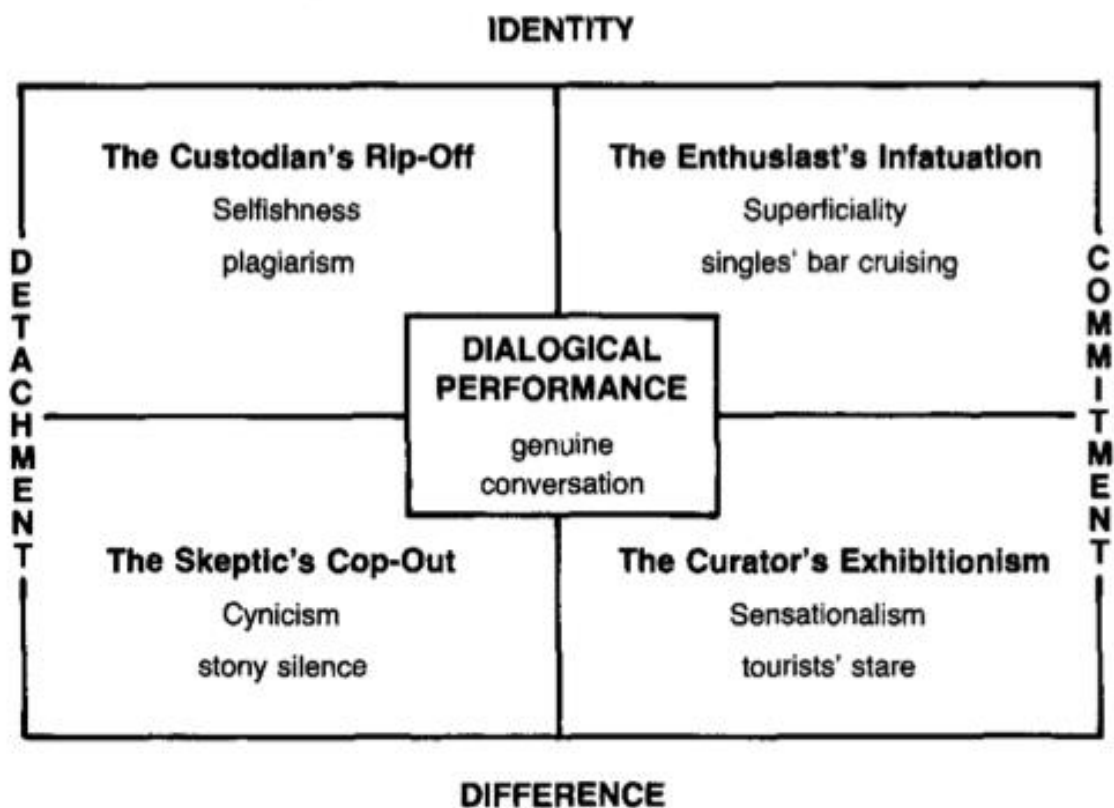


Figure 2. Moral Mapping of Performative Stances Towards the Other (1985)

The Custodian's Rip-Off refers to a detached researcher appropriating the participant's story, tradition, or culture for artistic gain as opposed to co-constructed meaning. The Enthusiast's Infatuation is the hurried researcher's failure to gain deep

meaning of the participant's story and therefore leads to the creation of a shallow representation that focuses on sameness. The Curator's Exhibitionism occurs when the researcher is too focused on the participants' differences and in turn dehumanizes the participants. Last, The Skeptic's Cop-Out is marked by a researcher who is cold and detached from the participants and therefore creates work that is either culturally insensitive or completely lacks cultural aspects.

Conquergood's solution to the above ethical dilemmas is what he refers to as "dialogical performance" (1985, p. 9). The researcher taking an active role in the interview process and creating a meaningful dialogue with the participant exemplifies dialogical performance. The participant should be talking *to* or *with* the researcher as opposed to *about* the topic or event. Conquergood suggested there were three indispensable traits for practitioners of dialogical performance: energy, imagination, and courage. When the researcher possesses those traits as well as works to dialogue with the participant, the space between identity and difference and detachment and commitment can be reached. I avoided these pitfalls within this study by engaging with participants in the manner by which both hermeneutic phenomenology and ethnodrama call. I remained energetic about the opportunity to speak with participants about their lived experiences. I continuously displayed courage by speaking with participants from an authentic, congruent, and curious space within myself. By doing so, I engaged with participants in a discussion and dialogue rather than a one-sided and distant manner. The participants and I created meaning together, which might have led to a greater opportunity for the research to have a deeper level of trustworthiness.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the study of the meaning behind the interpretation of lived experience (Davidson, 2014; Sloan & Bowe, 2013; van Manen, 2007).

Ethnodrama is the artistic representation of lived experiences (Conquergood, 1985; Saldaña, 2003). When hermeneutic phenomenology and ethnodrama are utilized to explore the experiences of a phenomenon, a deeper understanding can be gained by both the creation of common themes and the portrayal of those themes in a play.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher within both phenomenology and ethnodrama is similar. Within both approaches it is acknowledged that a detached researcher will produce an inaccurate portrayal of the experience of the participants (Saldaña, 2003; van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) believed researchers could gain greater understanding when they are deeply engaged in the research and perhaps hold the phenomenon as their own experience as well. Engagement is reflected in Conquergood's 1985 article *Moral Mapping of Performative Stances Towards the Other*, which explains the researcher cannot be detached, hurried, too focused on differences, or unwilling to co-create and co-construct the meaning of the participants' experiences. Therefore, the role of the researcher in a hermeneutic phenomenological ethnodrama is to be aware of biases and preconceived notions (van Manen, 1990) while engaging in honest and open dialogue with participants (Conquergood, 1985; Saldaña, 2003; van Manen, 1990) in order to create an artistic representation (Saldaña, 2003) of the co-constructed meaning of participants' lived experiences (Conquergood, 1985; van Manen, 1990).

Research Procedures

Selection of Participants

As this research culminated with an ethnodrama, it was important to have enough participants to form a cohesive, meaningful, expressive play. The experiences of multiple identities classified as “minority” were important to explore. As noted in Chapter One, multiple minority statuses and students with the opportunity to self-identify as different or a minority within their program have not been researched within counselor education. Thus, it behooves the researcher to have multiple participants with multiple identities interviewed in order to have a greater understanding of the lived experiences of minority students within counseling master’s programs. Although plays can have as few as one player or as many as can be conceived, due to the monologue-style of the proposed script and the need for varied voices and themes, I hoped to interview 10 master’s students who identify as a minority. In addition, having 10 participants in a qualitative phenomenological study was supported by the literature. When contextualizing sample size for hermeneutic phenomenology, Creswell (2013) referenced studies by Dukes (1984) and Riemen (1986), who recommended 3-10 or 10 participants respectively (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 157). Therefore, using 10 participants within this study is a normal expectation for quality, thorough hermeneutic phenomenology and ethnodrama. The graduate student listserv for the American Counseling Association (ACA) was utilized to find possible participants from all areas of the country. This listserv is open to all graduate students who are members of the American Counseling Association. I also used the listservs for the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling, Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

Issues in Counseling, and Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors. I posted to these listservs by emailing an invitation for research (Appendix A), which was then sent to all student members. Purposeful sampling was employed in order to determine the appropriateness of possible participants for this study (Coyne, 1997). Purposeful sampling is the selection of participants based on the richness of their ability to inform the research question (Coyne, 1997). The process of purposeful sampling will be addressed in the following section. In addition, it is important to recognize that although a play was written from the interviews and about the participants in this study, there are no plans as of yet for the play to be performed or produced. However, there may come a time when actors are used to portray the characters within the play, and this needed to be clear to possible participants.

Criteria

In order to gain a meaningful narrative of the experiences of minority students, the 10 participants needed to qualify as having information-rich and deep experiences of the phenomenon (Patton, 2001). The process of selecting participants because “they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon” is called purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). In this study, I utilized both criterion and snowball purposeful sampling. Criterion sampling means that possible participants were asked to meet specific criteria in order to partake in the study (Creswell, 2013). Snowball sampling was enlisted as I utilized ACA graduate listservs and counselor educators throughout the country with whom I had developed relationships in order to ask them to ascertain any students who met the research criteria and would be an asset to the study (Creswell, 2013). The criteria participants needed to meet were as

follows: Must be a current master's student within a counseling program located within the United States (van Manen, 1990). Must currently identify as a minority within their program and/or different than other people within their program (van Manen, 1990). Must exemplify reflexive and reflective advancement in order to provide rich dialogue (Conquergood, 1985; Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2003; van Manen, 1990). And finally, the chosen participants must agree to the stipulations in the informed consent that outlines interview expectations and the performative nature of the outcome of the research (Conquergood, 1985; Saldaña, 2003). These criteria were ascertained by having interested students answer short questions when responding to the research invitation (Appendix B). The requirements were:

- 1.) Please write about how or why you identify as a minority within your program or as different than other students within your program.
- 2.) Please describe your cultural identity.
- 3.) Consent to at least two interviews and one member-check.
- 4.) Consent to having a play written using their interviews as the foundation for characters, with no identifying information presented within the play.
- 5.) Please fill out, sign, and scan the informed consent and email it back to me.

From the answers to these questions, I was able to select 10 participants who met the previously mentioned criteria. Answers that were not reflective, did not exemplify minority statuses, or were redundant disqualified the student from participating. Once participants were selected and notified of acceptance through an email, the next step was to begin collecting data about their experiences as minority students within their master's counseling programs.

Data Collection

Electronic video capabilities (such as Skype or Face Time) were used to interview participants. Interviews were audio recorded in order to have them transcribed by Speech

Pad Services, an online transcription company that ensures confidentiality. Participants were also encouraged to submit journal entries, artwork, music compilations, poetry, photographs, or any other written or artistic artifacts as suggested by Saldaña (2003). In order to preserve participant confidentiality, no identifying artifacts were used.

The first round of question I asked were (Appendix C):

- 1.) How do you identify as a minority?
- 2.) What is your experience as a minority student in your master's program?
- 3.) What critical incidents have occurred during your master's program due to those facets of your identity?
- 4.) Where and from whom have you derived support within your program?

As the participants began answering these questions, I used Conquergood's Dialogical Performance (1985), which was explained in the previous section Ethical Considerations of Ethnodrama as an open and discussion-based research method, in order to engage in a conversation in hopes of co-constructing a genuine conversation that allowed for a greater understanding of the lived experiences of the participant. In addition, I worked to have the participants produce lived-experience descriptions as outlined by van Manen (1990):

- "1) Describe the experience as much as possible as you live(d) through it. Avoid causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations.
- 2) Describe the experience from the inside, as it were — almost like a state of mind: the feelings, the mood, the emotions, etc.
- 3) Focus on a particular example or incident of the object of experience: describe specific events, an adventure, a happening, a particular experience.
- 4) Try to focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness, or as it was the first time.
- 5) Attend to how the body feels, how things smell(ed), how they sound(ed), etc.
- 6) Avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases or flowery terminology" (p. 64-65).

I utilized van Manen's (1990) descriptions by, first, including them in the participant acceptance letter in order to allow the participants time to begin to think in

these specific terms. Second, as I interviewed each participant, I was aware of the opportunities that were present to explore these descriptors. These descriptors also helped add an element of richness to the ethnodrama by allowing for the monologues and characters to be as detailed as possible (Saldaña, 2003).

After using traditional coding procedures emergent from Hermeneutic Phenomenology to determine themes and consistent through-lines, I relayed new information to participants. The coding process consisted of reviewing the transcripts of the interviews and finding themes that participants had shared that appeared to be significant (Creswell, 2013; Rieman, 1986). Van Manen (1990) suggested asking the question, “What is this example an example of?” (p. 86). Creswell (2013) suggested the themes “should have certain qualities such as focus, a simplification of ideas, and a description of the structure of the lived experience” (p. 195). The text of the transcripts were analyzed through the overall text, statements, paragraphs, and sentences (Creswell, 2013). From this analysis, themes were derived and utilized in the creation of the ethnodrama. In the second round of interviews, I shared emerging themes and continued to ask for clarification and additions to help hone my understanding of the participants’ lived experiences. As the questions asked during the second interview were entirely depended on the experiences told and meaning made from the first interview, it was hard to predict what the second round questions would be. However the following are the questions that emerged after the first round of interviews (Appendix E):

- 1.) What are your reactions to the themes?
- 2.) What are your reactions to the quotes I pulled?
- 3.) What is missing?
- 4.) What would you change?
- 5.) How has your experience been since our first interview?

- 6.) What do you think you need me to know in order to really understand your experience?
- 7.) What would the overall theme of your master's experience be for you?
- 8.) Do you have any artistic/creative examples of your experience?

The third contact with participants was a member-check, which was used to maintain the meaning of experiences that emerged was congruent with the meaning the participant had created. Finally, I constructed an ethnodrama using combined voices of participants to create a potent theatrical narrative. This play was sent to the participants through email and they had the opportunity to request a fourth contact in which we discussed the play and characters that were created based on their own lived experiences. If necessary, modifications would have been made to the script.

Data Analysis

Participants were interviewed initially in order to ascertain their experiences as a minority student. Then I analyzed the ten interviews in order to find emergent themes (van Manen, 1990). Next, I interviewed the participants for a second time. This interview consisted of talking about the emergent themes, co-constructing the meaning of the themes and collective experiences of participants, and to discuss any further reflection that had occurred since the initial interview. I utilized the co-constructed themes to influence the creation of the ethnodrama that exemplified both the individual and collective experiences of master's students who self-identified as minority students. Once the ethnodrama script was completed, it was emailed to the participants in order to allow them time to think and process their reactions to the play. The last step in the data analysis was to have a final member-check with the participants in order to hear their reactions and determine if any of the play needed to be changed based on the

participants' requests. By consistently consulting with the participants to gain insight and constructive opportunities, the research had a higher level of trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is to qualitative research as validity is to quantitative research, meaning that qualitative research is found trustworthy when it is credible (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In order for a study to be trustworthy it needs to be credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Lincoln & Guba 1985) rather than generalizable. Sloan and Bowe (2013) explained the need for trustworthiness in hermeneutic phenomenology by stating, "When one is new to hermeneutic phenomenology as a method of analysis in qualitative research, it is easy to make mistakes in identifying experiences (or, as described here, isolating themes) and it is difficult to know that one got it right—that one has extracted proper lived experience and defined the meaning of an individual's (a research participant's) experience" (p. 1292).

Triangulation was one method through which I intended to combat threats to trustworthiness within my research. Maxwell (2013) defines triangulation as "collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods" (p. 128). The use of triangulation directly combated the possibility of my own lived experience negatively effecting the research. I utilized multiple media, artistic, and reflexive modalities in order to create a well-rounded portrayal of character themes that were not solely influenced by my own lived experiences.

Memo-ing was another method I used to remain reflexive and aware of my process. Hermeneutic Phenomenology and ethnodrama both indicate that complete bracketing is not possible because the researcher inevitably works with the participants to

construct an artistic interpretation of perceived reality (Conquergood, 1985; van Manen, 1990). Memo-ing and journaling allowed me to consistently stay attuned to my own biases and needs within this study. Further, documentation is a form of trustworthiness that allows the researcher to document findings, reflections, and processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I documented the research process by audio recording all interviews, obtaining typed transcripts of the interviews, and writing continuously about my research process.

I also utilized my own reactions and thoughts found in memo-ing, journaling, and documentation by consistently engaging in my experience of being a researcher with trusted colleagues. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this process as peer debriefing. I engaged in dialogue about my findings, reactions, personalizations, and ideas with my dissertation chair as well as other colleagues. This allowed for a trustworthiness check by unbiased people who were not as tied to the research as I was. Co-constructing the themes and meaning behind the experiences with participants, remaining aware of my own biases, and engaging in my own reflection as the research developed ensured the trustworthiness of this study (van Manen, 1990).

Conclusion

The experiences of minority students with various cultural identities within master's counseling programs have not been studied within counselor education research. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of self-identified minority students within master's counseling programs. In order to gain deep understanding of the varied lived experiences a student may face, a qualitative inquiry and phenomenological methodology were chosen. The meaning of the experiences were explored; therefore

hermeneutic phenomenology was the best fit. Finally, the emergent themes and experiences of participants were told through the lens of an ethnodramatic play. The final product of this research may help counselor educators become informed about the specific needs and challenges their students face. In addition, the play may be able to be used within multicultural classes to provide a mirror for minority students and a learning opportunity for the class.

Chapter III

First Round Analysis

Introduction

The first round of interviews and data analysis was conducted during the end of the fall semester of 2014. Research invitations were sent out to three universities at which I had contacts, the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling listserv, the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling listserv, the Counselor Educators and Supervisors listserv, and the American Counseling Association Graduate Student listserv (Appendix A). As of writing this, there were 42 responses of people interested in participating in this study. Some were ruled out due to the study's participant criteria (e.g. not being currently enrolled in a master's counseling program). I then sent the informed consent and questionnaire to the remaining eligible people (Appendices C & D). Approximately 20 people completed the necessary forms to participate in the study. I chose the final 10 participants based on reflection represented in their written responses as well as aiming to represent the broadest sampling of minority statuses. For example, if one participant spoke to being isolated by the Christian majority, I would then seek a participant who spoke to being isolated as a Christian. The goal of this selection process was to explore the vast identities that could identify as minorities within a counseling master's program.

The interviews were held through video conferencing on Skype, FaceTime, or Google Chat. The participants chose the pseudonyms of Gee, Ysera, Mary, Matthew, Mae, Rose, Beth, Olivia, Amy, and Dave. The formalized questions asked were expanded throughout the first round process as different points were expressed and

deemed as important. The interviews were structured insofar as there were set topics to explore, however each interview was relaxed and based on curiosity, conversational congruence, and led by both the interviewer and the interviewee. The generalized questions I asked each person in the first round of interviews were as follows:

- 1.) How do you identify as a minority?
- 2.) What is your experience as a minority student in your master's program?
- 3.) What critical incidents have occurred during your master's program due to those facets of your identity?
- 4.) Where and from whom have you derived support within your program?
- 5.) Why did you choose to become a counselor?
- 6.) What would you tell other students who are a minority in their program?
- 7.) How do you relate to the word minority?

The interviews were fluid in structure and although the seven questions were present, often the dialogue was free flowing. Many of the questions were naturally answered within the conversation and it was not necessary for them to be asked. Each interview was audio-recorded and then sent to a professional transcription service. Confidentiality is guaranteed by the transcription company to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees would be maintained. Once all ten interviews were transcribed, I began the phenomenological process of data analysis.

The coding process within hermeneutic phenomenology has three analysis options that aim to uncover thematic aspects of the lived experience and to isolate thematic statements: “wholistic or sententious approach, selective or highlighting approach, and detailed or line-by-line approach” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 94). I utilized all three approaches as I began to search for themes within the transcripts. Within the “wholistic or sententious approach” the researcher is tasked with determining the overall feeling or meaning within the participant's story. The selective or highlighting approach works to pinpoint phrases that “standout” within the transcript (van Manen, 1990, p. 94). Once I

completed the “wholistic” and highlighting approach, I began the detailed or line-by-line approach by finding the meaning in each line of the phrases I had collected for each participant. Through these methods, nine essential themes with sub-themes emerged. In the proceeding sections I will introduce the ten participants and then outline the nine themes that emerged from the data.

Participants

Gee. Gee is an African-American male in his late 50’s who is pursuing his master’s in counseling while working as a clinician in an addictions facility. He identifies as “in recovery” for an addiction to drugs and alcohol and as an adult learner. Gee stated he is fearful of being stereotyped and judged “for [his] age, for [his] color, for [his] experience.” Gee also identifies as a minority due to his familial drug and alcohol history, including the death of his brother as a “direct result of being an IV drug user.” He stated, “So that also, I feel, places me as a minority because I’m sure a lot of people know people that have died from addiction, but not many have experienced the loss of a sibling because of addiction.”

Our first interview focused on his transition into his master’s program. His demeanor seemed to suggest he was in an overall positive place, while struggling to find acceptance among a group of new people. He often spoke about his life being a journey and that God had led him to the field of counseling. Gee had previous work experience as a counselor and he was working through the experience of learning new skills while attending to the many he had already acquired. The central point of his minority experience in his program stemmed from feeling as though his classmates and faculty viewed him in a negative light due to his race, age, and previous lived experiences.

Ysera. Ysera is a White, non-binary transgender person (meaning a gender identity that is neither male nor female) who also identifies as pansexual (ability to be attracted to any/all sex and gender identities) and demisexual (sexual attraction due to emotional connection not physical attributes). Ysera's preferred pronouns are "they" and "them." Ysera is in their early twenties and stated, "I also live with PTSD from multiple sexual assaults, as well as a learning/processing disorder."

Ysera was working through their tumultuous relationships with their peers within their counseling program. Ysera was in the first semester of the counseling program and spoke about how they were shocked at the ignorance of their classmates. Also important to note, is Ysera was in the process of 'coming out' as non-binary transgender while in the first semester of their program. Ysera told their faculty and classmates before they told their parents. A few weeks before our first interview, Ysera told their parents and was still processing that experience.

Mary. Mary is a Latina woman in her mid-twenties. She was born in the United States, was raised in Mexico in a small, rural community, and then returned to the U.S. in her late teens. Her first language is Spanish. She stated she is the "only Latina in [her] program."

Mary spoke about her inability to create close relationships with her classmates. She had oppressive and racist experiences in her undergraduate program from faculty and students and was fearful she might experience the same in her master's program. Though, she had friends outside of the program and could easily build rapport with the students with whom she was working; she often repeated that she did not know if she was not making friends due to her race or her personality.

Matthew. Matthew is a male in his early 30's and identifies as Native American and gay. He also identifies as Southern and stated that has "informed my identity almost as much as growing up poor and gay." He stated, "I was one of the very few male counseling students and then, as far as I know, to this day, I'm still the only one that's 'out'." Matthew identifies as a minority within his program due to his gender, affectional/sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

Throughout our interview, Matthew and I discussed his ability to present in a manner that was most appropriate given the situation. He spoke about choosing to show the Native American or gay part of himself. I wondered if that caused him to feel like less of his whole, authentic self. Matthew explained that he had many different identities and choosing to withhold one identity did not diminish who he was. He also spoke about how he had felt like a minority so often in his life that he had built coping skills and that his experience in his master's program might have been different had he never experienced oppression before.

Mae. Mae is a White woman in her mid-twenties who identifies as a minority because she is an atheist and, more specifically, a secular humanist. She attended a Christian-based university counseling program and then transferred to a secular university counseling program due to ethical disagreements with the faculty's teaching methods. Although currently attending a non-religious institution, Mae stated that due to her previous experiences, she was unwilling to disclose personal beliefs within her new program for fear of being persecuted.

Mae spoke about how she had attended a Christian university for her undergrad and had loved the school and the experience. She explained that in her undergraduate

experience, she was challenged to think about all possibilities and to accept only her own truth. She was a philosophy major. Her first master's program was different than her undergrad because students were told what to believe and to use Christianity in their counseling. Our interview revolved around her comparing her first program to her current program. Although her current program had not hurt her, she was in constant fear that her beliefs would be revealed and she would be asked to leave the program.

Rose. Rose is a White woman in her 30's. Although she is attending a Christian-based university, she identifies as Buddhist. Rose lives in a city that has a large Buddhist community, therefore, she is "used to being the majority" in terms of her religious identity. However, she is now in an environment in which she sees herself as a minority because within her program there is only one other Buddhist person.

During our first interview, Rose was upbeat and cheerful about her experience as a minority in her counseling master's program. Although she recognizes that she holds different beliefs than her peers and faculty, she sees her differences as accepted and encouraged. There is another Buddhist on campus and her peers hold him in high esteem. Rose explored her feelings around being different within our interview.

Beth. Beth is a White woman in her 30's. She identifies as Mormon or LDS (Latter Day Saint). She is single, which she stated in her cultural and religious community, "there aren't very many people" who are single. Although many of her classmates also identify as LDS, Beth stated, "I feel like I get lumped into a group of people when my experiences within the religious context are different."

The major discussion within our first interview was Beth's views on lesbians and gay people. She spoke about how her church taught homosexual acts were a sin.

However, she believed that her counseling program was teaching that people who thought that being gay was a sin were bigots. Beth's beliefs were that it was only up to God to judge and for some gay people it was a choice and for others it was not. She was conflicted between advocating for her church, respecting her counseling program, and finding her own beliefs.

Olivia. Olivia is a White woman in her twenties. She is a lesbian and identifies as androgynous, meaning "on the spectrum of femininity and masculinity, I kind of fall in the middle or more toward the masculine side." She also stated her counseling classes are predominately heterosexual people.

Olivia explained that she did not know if it was her sexuality or her gender presentation that caused her to feel more different from her peers. She stated that she was more than her sexuality or gender presentation and that she felt close to many heterosexual people within her life. However, she was surprised to be the only gay woman within her program.

Amy. Amy is a White woman in her 30's. She identifies as a minority because she attends a historically Black university. She reported she is the only White person in her entire program and one of the few White people on campus. Amy has often been in the racial majority throughout her life and her experience in her master's program is new for her.

Amy explained that she was examining her life in a way that was new to her. She began to question why she was close to certain people within her program. She did not know if it was because she was a minority and her friends were also a racial minority.

Amy had never had the experience of being “other.” She also struggled because although she was a racial minority, she recognized the privilege she had as a White person.

Dave. Dave is a White man in his late twenties who has a C4/C5 spinal cord injury and is a tetraplegic and a former college athlete. He utilizes technology-based assistance such as a sip-and-puff controlled power wheel chair. He stated he prefers “alternative labels of *disadvantaged* or *physically challenged* as opposed to *disabled*.” Dave said he is the only person in a wheelchair in his counseling program.

During our first interview, Dave explained that he felt different than the other people in his program, but he also felt accepted by his peers. Before the car accident that left him paralyzed, he had been a college football player who had played in front of 80,000 people. His past team experience and ability to push through pain allowed him to have greater coping skills in his recovery. His injuries were fairly new to him and Dave explained that he was still adjusting to losing his athlete identity and presenting as different to others.

Essential and Sub- Themes

Coding for the first round of interviews revealed nine essential themes with various subthemes. The essential themes are: **Past Trauma/Lived Experiences/Minority Experiences, Support and Validation, Congruence/Coming Out/Being Open, Critical Incident/Defining Moment, Quitting/Questioning, Responsibility, Relationship with Minority Status, Cultural Norms, and Expectations.** These essential themes were determined by “wholistic,” highlighting, and line-by-line approaches (van Manen, 1990). The meaning within the emergent themes was then used to create the essential theme name. Some of the themes have multiple

titles, and after the next round of interviews, I was able to be more specific with finalized wording. The subthemes were created to delineate how participants were in connection with the essential theme. Most participants fit into one subtheme per essential theme. Some participants were represented in multiple subthemes. Mae is absent from Responsibility and Cultural Norms, and then Gee, Ysera, Matthew, Amy, and Dave are missing from Expectations. Within the second round, it was tasked to see if the missing participants have experiences that are congruent with the essential themes listed; if not, those essential themes may become incidental. A table was created in order to have a visual representation of the essential and sub- themes (Figure 3). In the following sections, I will thoroughly describe each essential theme and the subthemes that describe the lived experience of self-identified minority students within a master's counseling program.

Round One Themes

Past Trauma/ Lived Experiences/ Minority Experiences	Support and Validation	Congruence/ Coming Out/ Being Open	Critical Incident/ Defining Moment	Quitting/ Questioning	Responsibility	Relationship with Minority Status	Cultural Norms	Expectations
Effect in Class/Program	Lack of and Seeking others Like Self	Choosing to Speak or Remain Silent in Class	Affirming/ Confirming Experience		To Self	Length of Time	Counseling Micro Aggressions	Counselors / Faculty
Personal Counseling/ Experience with a Counselor	Self/ Spirituality/ Coping Skills	Intentional Self Disclosure	Isolating Experience		To Educating Majority	Past Minority Experience	Counseling Norms vs. Cultural Norms	Peers/ Counselors in Training
Reason for Becoming a Counselor in Training	Faculty, Supervisors, Internship, Program (positive and not)	Awareness of Effect of Self on Class/ Others	Relational Experience		To advocacy of Minority	Level of Comfort with Minority Group	Value Conflict/ Sense of Self as Counselor	
	Cohort/ Peers (positive and not)	Fear of Rejection			Of Speaking as a Member of the Minority	Level of Comfort with Majority Group	Sharing the Minority Experience	
					To Others			

Figure 3. First Round Essential and Sub- Themes

Past trauma/ lived experiences/ minority experiences. Perhaps the most prevalent theme that clearly emerged from the interviews with all ten participants was the effect of **past trauma or lived experiences as a minority**. Past trauma is classified as times in which the participants experienced intense emotional turmoil. Lived experiences and minority experiences were times in which participants had occurrences that impacted them both emotionally and cognitively. All of these experiences became a part of the participants' identity formation. Without much prompting, each participant chose to share a component of their past that was effecting their present experience within their counseling master's program. The essential theme was then divided into subthemes of: Effect in class/Program, Personal Counseling/ Experience with a Counselor, and Reason for Becoming a Counselor in Training. While some past situations were negatively impacting the participants' present experiences, some were the direct cause of enrolling in a counseling program, and others were a source of strength.

Effect in class/program. Participants discussed the ways in which their past trauma and/or minority experiences effected their time within their counseling master's program and within classes. The participants explained the feelings that had once been present within their personal lives were resurfacing within their master's program. It also seemed as though the participants were very aware of how their identity (whether minority or not) affected the classroom dynamic.

Ysera spoke to the way their diagnosis with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to sexual assault had been stigmatized within their master's program:

YSERA: I do suffer from PTSD and sometimes that causes issues within the program, what's in my life because people don't understand how can you be a counselor when you have this, and I find that hurtful. I have been dealing with this since I was 16, I make strides every day and you are telling me you can be

better than me just because I have something going on. I'm like, I don't see how it has effected me in the program yet?

Ysera's experience of feeling judged based on a facet of their identity was similar to Mae's past experiences within her previous master's program. Mae discussed how the past judgment of being atheist in a religious program was directly impacting her ability to connect with peers within her new program. When a friend and peer of hers found out about Mae's atheist beliefs, she told the faculty within the counseling program. This occurrence catapulted Mae's experience of being ostracized and persecuted within her first master's counseling program:

MAE: I kind of felt really betrayed and it really hurt my trust in other people so I don't really talk to anyone in my program here. I kind of try to stay away, actually, and not make friends, just because I'm afraid that if I reveal something to them they're going to go and tell on me or something. I don't know. I know it's irrational but because it happened before and... I don't know.

Beth's experience related to that of Ysera and Mae in that she saw the effects of personal experiences resurface within the classroom. Beth explained the importance of faculty and peers remaining aware of how classroom material may effect students. Beth explained that her past trauma and lived experiences could resurface within the classroom during specific classroom discussions:

BETH: I think stuff comes up for people in the program. That same thing kind of happens but it's not as prepared for and even people in class who are learning about stuff from an academic standpoint, and then you have somebody who has a real life experience that they've been through, people aren't always sensitive to that.

Both Matthew and Olivia explained how their personal minority identity effected their times within the counseling classroom. There seems to be an added component of self-awareness that occurred for both Matthew and Olivia. Matthew explained how he

was curious about the ways in which a minority student effects the learning outcomes and teaching style of a counselor educator by saying:

MATTHEW: Does the very presence of somebody who “I assume that you're marginalized, I see that you're a person of color, or a person of size, or person of disability or what not.” Does that change how I teach? Does that change the narratives that I offer up in the classroom? Would those narratives ever have happened if you hadn't been in the classroom?

Olivia's experience is similar to Matthew's and she explained she also wondered what the class would be like without her present. She expressed curiosity about how class discussions might be different if she were not in class:

OLIVIA: ...because I told my girlfriend that I kind of sometimes wish I was a fly on the wall. So I could be in the room and see what people are saying, but not be there. So people didn't feel like they had to hold back maybe some things, like, ‘Oh, I know there's a gay person in the room. So I'm not going to say this.’ ...It's not necessarily that I've seen people trying to say things, and then they're holding back. It's more of just like you kind of know, being a part of the oppressed group, that the more dominant group is a little more uncomfortable with you.

Whether a component of past occurrences or personal identifiers, experiences within the counseling program and counseling classroom are directly impacted for minority students. Participants found their own trauma histories resurfacing within the classroom. In addition, minority identities were likely to effect the experience for students within class. Relationships within the program and safety within the classroom are both impacted for minority students.

Personal counseling/ experience with a counselor. Some of the participants spoke about their past experiences with counseling and/or counseling professionals. The students expressed how part of their minority identities led them to counseling. These past experiences had direct implications for the minority students choosing counseling as

a career. Rose described a transformative experience that occurred while she was a teenager with a counselor who challenged her depression:

ROSE: And she was like, 'Can you just stop? Can you get over it?' and I was like, 'Whoa, really? Okay, and you're being paid to say this?' I was so taken aback by her bluntness and how mean she sounded and it really destroyed me at first, but then I reflected on it. I'm going, 'Yeah, why don't I just get over it? What is preventing me from getting over it? Why can't I just be in the present moment?' That was a huge turning point for me as a person and I'm going, 'Instead of being selfish and going me, me, me, it's all about me, it's all about my experience, how can I not be like the people that I hated in elementary school and junior high? How can I be the person that I want to be and help other people to not be in pain, not be in psychological pain with the knowledge that I know?'

Beth found her experience of seeing a counselor who had the same minority identity she had was impactful:

BETH: I went to counseling. I went to... that was the first time I told anybody about the abuse. My counselor. She was LDS and she helped me at times to see a lot of the way that I was doing things was necessarily how I really wanted to do things like taking everything at face value that I was told to do religiously and then doing it and thinking that I have to be perfect.

Both Rose and Beth found their previous experiences with counselors as critical components to their current lived experiences within their counseling master's programs. They held the experiences with counselors close while growing and developing in their minority identities. Counselors and the field of counseling helped both Beth and Rose choose counseling as a career-path as adults.

Reason for becoming a counselor in training. Similar to **Personal Counseling/Experience with a Counselor**, experiences in participants' pasts impacted their reason for becoming a counselor in training. Choosing to become a counselor was not an arbitrary decision; instead participants had a long-standing experience that influenced their choices. Many of the participants spoke about a personal need to help others that had experiences similar to those of close friends, family, or themselves. In addition,

some of the reasoning also stemmed from the impact of minority identity within the experiences. For example, Gee's recovery identity as well as his personal history resulted in his choice to become a counselor:

GEE: But the other thing, and I share this with people in recovery more so, one of the things that I invested to do is to be able to stop people from dying like my brother did. The story goes that he died on the streets of Baltimore City, Maryland. We still don't know where he's buried at, and we didn't find out that he was dead until 2010 and supposedly he died in 2001... So I feel like it's a spiritual journey that led me to counseling, and something inside of me that, the little kid that never knew what he wanted to be when he grew up, found a purpose. Supposedly, not supposedly, I'm good at it. I enjoy it, I embrace it. I work full time as a counselor in a treatment center here and I'm making a difference, and that fills me.

Similarly, Ysera spoke about their sexual trauma history, which contributed to both a component of their minority identity as well as a choice to become a counselor:

Ysera: So I'm glad to be where I am today and it definitely led me to this profession, to my special interest, to who I want to treat. I wish it never happened but it has led me to some great things.

Mae and Amy described how their personal and familial history affected their choice to pursue counseling:

MAE: I had an eating disorder in high school and I went to therapy and it helped. So I just decided that that would be interesting. Then I started reading *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey, and it was about addiction. I know it's not a true story but they said it was a memoir at the time, and it just kind of really introduced me to the field of addiction. Then I started reading memoirs about addiction and I just really fell in love with it. My dad is a hoarder so that kind of tied in too. I guess that's the reason. The main reason was because I went to therapy when I was a teenager.

AMY: My sister had been in treatment facilities before, she's been to three different ones for eating disorders and so just talking with her and experiencing that and she was more talking me into it. She was like you'd be really good at that and then so I thought about being a counselor at a high school.

Beth also had experiences within her minority identity and her personal and career goals that led her to a counseling program:

BETH: Church gave me a lot of those opportunities to connect with people. So I just connected with people in all these different like settings and environments but I didn't really have the skills to help them. I don't know what the right thing to say is when someone is going through something. I don't know what's helpful, what's not helpful. So I always was like if I had counseling skills one, I could be a better teacher. I could be a better coach. I could be a better person. I could help people in their church callings.

Mary also had previous work experiences that influenced her to pursue school counseling as a career. She spoke about her job as an academic and college prep advisor to other ethnic/racial minority students:

MARY: There was this one girl that she got accepted to class of her choice. I prepped her, I helped her. She went there almost, not completely full, right? I'm like, 'Yeah, this will be good.' I really love the relationship with students, I love being around them. I'm usually, I'm more of an introvert, so I get my energy from being away from people but somehow being with students kind of excites me. And especially with underprivileged students, it makes me want to get up out of bed every morning and I love sleeping. They're a big motivation.

Much like the others, Olivia's minority identity was a major consideration in her choice to become a counselor. She described the process of accepting her minority self as an impetus in wanting to counsel other similar minority people:

OLIVIA: I wrote a whole paper on why I went into counseling, and I think a part of it is the whole learning to accept yourself for who you are. Being a gay person, it wasn't always easy to be so open and accepting of who I was.... I couldn't accept that I liked masculine things until I accepted myself as a gay woman, and then I realized I wasn't alone. There were other butch androgynous lesbians out there, and this wasn't just a weird thing I do. But I think that kind of fueled me going into counseling because I learned how to accept myself and get to a healthy happy place I kind of want to do the same for others, especially in the LGBT community.

Matthew had his own preconceived notions about what counseling entailed. He was in a job that involved a lot of advocacy work and he found himself feeling fulfilled by the work and looking for the next step in his career. The convergence of his passion and counseling led him to his master's program:

MATTHEW: Realizing that the advocacy that I was doing... was all really actually a part of counseling and that was really...It wasn't that you go sit on a couch and tell me your problems, and tell me your life story. There was really something more to that, and I think that really appealed to me.

Dave explained how his paralyzation and subsequent rehabilitation led to his choice to become a counselor:

DAVE: At the time, I had no movement. I didn't have any movement in my arms at all for nine months. So that's kind of what I prepared for. They set me up with sip and puff. I'm still working in the, I'm still trying to get away from it and move to a joystick, but I'm just being stubborn. They set me up with the sip and puff, and I learned it in less than five minutes. And I turned around and they set this other guy up with the sip and puff too. He was struggling with it a little bit, and I was able to put it in terms for him really easily. And within a half hour, he was picking it up. Just that helping factor. Other people with disabilities like me, I liked it. And counseling's helping like that too.

Participants shared an experience that directly impacted their decision to pursue a master's degree in counseling. Many of the experiences that were most impactful in their lives also stemmed from their minority identity. Minority students' trauma and lived experiences influence them insofar as their experiences within the classroom and counseling program and their reasoning for choosing the career of counseling.

Support and validation. Participants' perceptions of support, validation, or the lack thereof, stood out as a clear component of the minority counseling student experience. Each participant spoke about the impact of other people within their lives, school, or counseling program. Some of the participants found support within their

program, while others needed to rely on people outside of the counseling program to offer support or validation.

Lack of and seeking others like self. Many participants spoke about their feeling of being alone or lonely within their master's counseling program. Part of their loneliness stemmed from not seeing other people like themselves. This lack of identification adds to the missed opportunity for validation and support. Ysera explained how there are no other people like them within their counseling program:

YSERA: ...but I think that these things about me that are very different and unique that some other people in my program don't have. Because there's no one in the program that identifies like me. It has no trans people...

Olivia has a similar struggle with not seeing people like herself within her program. She shared how she often looks for other LGBTQ people within her classes:

OLIVIA: Typically when I go into class, the first thing I do is I try to see if there's any other gay people. I know that's like... How can you see someone's sexual orientation? Well, you can't. So there's that. Of course, people in the community think they have gaydar, and I am one of those people that think that. So I will unfortunately stereotype and look and stuff, or just the obvious, if their gender expression is different from the typical masculine/feminine roles. Typically I don't find anyone, or I find one person or two people. So then it's kind of like, 'Oh, there's my ally,' just sitting there in class...

Olivia made the point that seeing others like herself would allow her to feel supported but using the term ally." This principle resonated with Mae's experience within her program. She spoke about how she felt more comfortable with people who identified as the same minority she did:

MAE: I just am actually more comfortable around other atheists. I know that sounds like... I don't know if that sounds bad but like my therapist, when I found out that she was an atheist too, it was like a huge relief because I could actually talk openly with her. It felt like I could be more open and more real and more true to myself without setting up these defense mechanisms.

Mary wondered about her connection with others in her program. Although she was not sure, she felt as though her minority status was alienating her from her classmates:

MARY: And I don't know, like sometimes I'm usually okay about getting to know other people, talking to people, but I don't know, I just feel like I disconnect from my classmates, like everyone has these groups of friends, they stick with each other, but for some reason I haven't been able to make those connections with friends.

Many of the participants knew they might not see others like themselves within their counseling programs, but the reality of that situation was harder than they had expected. Dave, on the other hand, was hoping to find people who had the same physical abilities as he did. As a student in a rehabilitation counseling program that exists within a mental health CACREP accredited program, Dave made an assumption that many of his peers would have experienced the need for rehabilitation services at some point in their lives. Dave considers his injuries “new” and was hoping to see others like himself within his program, and was making meaning of being the only person in a wheelchair:

DAVE: And that's part of kind of my exploration as a student counselor is realizing not everybody's going to be like me. And I think I had somewhat of an image of that for some reason.

As evidenced through the experiences participants chose to share, the benefit of seeing others like themselves within their program was both known and missed. Some of the lack of mirrors available seemed to have a direct effect on the support minority students felt within their programs.

Self/ spirituality/ coping skills. A major component of support within the master's program was not dependent on others; rather, it was the coping skills the participants had gained throughout their lives. The coping skills that helped minority

students feel supported involved spirituality and resilience. Gee, for example, spoke about how his choice to be a counselor and therefore his experiences within his counseling program were meant to be:

GEE: So that's the other reason why finding my place here in something I enjoy, counseling, is another spiritual thing for me. Because it's like I found my purpose.

That spiritual component also occurred with both Rose and Beth. Rose explained how her spirituality was present within her program and that offered support while Beth explained how her spirituality was a component of her resilience:

ROSE: Every day there is something that happens on a spiritual level that tells me - in a personal level - that tells me, 'This is it. This is exactly where I need to be, how I need to be doing it.' If you look at the Jesuit ideals of [university] and you think about well, how does that permeate the mission? How does that permeate how the teachers approach instruction? Where does that come from in the people that I'm in my cohort with? All of that enriches my experience even if it's not on the same quality or capacity, maybe - I'm looking for the right word - but it's still there. It's always there and I know it's there and it's not - I guess it would be like if you knew that, I guess, your God would be always there, like, 'Yeah, God is always there.' Spirituality is always there.

BETH: I was probably depressed a lot growing up after some of those experiences but I would pray for comfort or relief or to get through that situation and I would get it.

Olivia also had a sense of resiliency in part due to her minority status:

OLIVIA: I think the more you're out and the more you're accepting of yourself, there is going to be more of a backlash, but you get used to it. I know that's kind of sad to say. But in a way, you get used to the discrimination, and you get better at handling it and knowing, 'Okay. This person doesn't like me because I'm gay. Too bad for them because I'm a cool person.'

These participants were able to find support and validation within themselves, their minority status experiences, or their spiritual identity, regardless of the support that was present within the counseling program.

Faculty, supervisors, internship, program (positive and not). Educational implementations such as faculty, supervisors, and internship sites offered some students the support and validation they sought, while those components worked to further isolate other students. The existence or lack thereof of similar minority identifying people within each element seemed to greatly effect the perception of the experience for the participants. For example, Mary believed faculty in her program were supportive, however she wondered how much a non-Latina person could identify with her experience:

MARY: No, but I mean my adviser and my other professors are really great. I know that if I really wanted to I could go and talk to them. At the same time I'm like, I mean, what else can they really do and what else can they really tell me?

The perceived openness of faculty as well as their minority status or allied identity effected students. It seemed as though counselor educators who were willing to express their beliefs that aligned with the self-identified minority students were more likely to be seen as supportive. Matthew, Olivia, and Dave all spoke to the importance of their faculty and how support and validation were derived from them:

MATTHEW: So there was a culture of addressing that I felt like sort of open. And I saw that a lot in the orientation class and ethics in my second semester I think, a lot of conversation about the professional identity is connected to all people and that we are supposed to be able to connect to all people and respect them and that was kind of nice.

OLIVIA: So overall, he's pretty open about his opinions about things in class, and he's a pretty liberal person. So I knew he was a safe ally, as well as my other two professors. They both were very out and open about their acceptance of the LBGT community.

DAVE: I mean, they're really good at it. I mean, they're just smart. They've been at it a long time. But they do, they want to know that perspective in class, and it makes me feel good. That I can offer that. And they thank me for that.

Dave found support in his perception that his experiences and perspective were welcomed in class. Mae had not felt that way in her first master's program and, in fact, had been told that her perspective was not welcomed. This caused her to believe that she would be unable to counsel people who were different than her minority identity (religious people). However, she realized her fears were unfounded while working at her practicum site through her new university:

MAE: Through doing my new practicum here, and everything looks fine, and I had religious clients and it was perfectly all right. I even suggested that they should go to church if they were religious, like "Go back to church. Maybe that will make you feel happier," and it did. My confidence has built up in myself because I know I can do it and what they said was wrong about me. Just because you're atheist doesn't mean that you don't understand the value of religion.

The major systemic elements of a counseling master's program- faculty, supervisors, internship sites, and the counseling program itself all lend themselves to the students' perceptions of support and validation. While one student spoke about not being sure if privileged faculty could truly understand her experiences, open and available faculty were seen as supports.

Cohort/ peers (positive and not). The final component of students feeling supported or validated came from their cohort and or peers within the counseling program. Some participants spoke about a divide between their peers and themselves. Other students felt as though their peers treated them just like they would treat someone of a non-minority status. Amy spoke about how her closest relationship with a peer caused her to ask questions she had never considered before identifying as a minority:

AMY: It's good to have someone to keep up with. So we kind of just stick together now. And then sometimes I think about it and I'm like ... well I mean chances are ... I mean you have to stick with somebody, but I don't know the Asian American and the White person stuck together. I think it's just really by

chance like our personalities matched better and circumstance. We were both in the interview group and then sat together the first class and then kept going.

Gee explained that he got along with most of the people within his program; however, he believed there was an unspoken divide between himself and the other students. Part of that dissonance appeared to stem from his recovery and age minority identities:

GEE: But I still feel the difference with my classmates. I can make friends on the surface, but not many people can be a close friend, if you know what I mean. It's, like, because I don't hang out with people that go to bars and stuff like that, so I'm still that same way.

Dave's perception was that although he is physically different than the other people within his program, he was able to easily make friends with his cohort:

DAVE: But they're all great people. Treated me just like anybody else. They come up, I live about 30 minutes away so I'm commuting down there. It's saved me a lot of money... But yeah, they come down here every once in a while. We go out to the movies and stuff...

The perceived support and validation that occurred for each participant seemed to have a great bearing on their sense of safety and cohesion within the program. While some participants could only rely on themselves, others were able to find support in faculty or peers. It appears that minority students need to work for the support they receive within their counseling program. Students seem to have a vigilant task of ascertaining people within the system who can serve as an ally for their minority identity.

Congruence/ coming out/ being open. Minority students seem to be constantly determining if a classroom or program is safe within to disclose. Each participant spoke about their experience of making a choice to 'come out' within class. Some chose not to, while others found it to be a sort of responsibility to be open. The fear of rejection seemed to have an impact on whether or not a student would choose to self-disclose.

Choosing to speak or remain silent in class. Many of the participants spoke about their inner struggle in choosing to speak or remain quiet in classes. Part of the choice to remain quiet came from the lack of support students feel as well as the lack of others who identify as a similar minority. Safety within the classroom was effected by faculty and peers and also contributed to students choosing to speak within the class. Gee described an incident with a peer of his. His peer, a White woman, had committed a micro aggression toward him. The experience is discussed in further detail in *Isolating Experience* under **Critical/Defining Moments**. Although he tended to be more vocal within class, his peer challenged him on his choice to be active in class, which caused Gee to question his voice. Gee explained this incident brought up the self-doubt he had experienced in the past as a light-skinned Black man and his old coping skill of fleeing the situation:

GEE: Because I was saying, 'Look, if there's something I said in the past, if you don't want me here, just let me know and I'll leave. I don't have to come back,' and I was saying, 'I can come to class and I can sit down and still learn what I'm supposed to learn, but I don't need to participate and stuff.'

Beth spoke about a faculty member who seemed to have the same effect as the peer did for Gee. Beth referred to a moment in class when her professor brought up religion and LGBTQ people. Beth believed the faculty member had made assumptions about the class' belief systems and instead of listening wanted to fight them:

BETH: I felt like she wanted to battle people... That kind of environment is not any environment for either side to understand each other. I didn't say anything in that situation. When I went down to [internship site]... we talked about religion and sexuality. That was an environment where I felt more like I can stand up and say something because I felt safer in that environment... So there are certain people that I feel safe to talk to about that but it's in way smaller groups. I wouldn't talk about that in bigger groups with people.

Beth found her voice at her internship site, but contests that she would not be able to talk about her minority belief system in bigger groups within her counseling program. Amy also had difficulty speaking in class. She explained that, as the only White person in her class, she did not think she could voice her own opinions for fear of offending someone:

AMY: I guess just for a while it was kind of awkward because I didn't know how to act or how to react to things. Like I was just kind of quiet. Like I'm not going to start controversy over what I think about some racial aspects on some topic. Not that I'm all alone, but it would be 26 people to 1 that's what it feels like. But then I'm realizing a lot of people don't even think that way and they don't all have the same opinions so I think a lot of it is brought on by myself or was in the beginning.

Similar to Amy, Mary often chose not to speak in class because she was the only Latina in the room:

MARY: So I feel like when I want to be more vocal I tend to shy away from it just because I don't feel that support and it's like when I do I just kind of feel like the odd person in class, like I stick out too much and not necessarily always in the best way, in a positive way.

Olivia had processed through her experiences within the classroom with choosing to speak or not. She explained that her minority identity and her awareness of the privileged majority in her classes caused her to question speaking or remaining silent:

OLIVIA: How often do you speak up in class about the issues that we're talking about? And how often do you stay back because you know you already know this stuff about the community? I want other people to feel like they can add the conversation. I don't want to dominate the conversation, just because I'm a part of the community, and obviously I have an array of knowledge about the community. It's always a little hard to walk that line. How often do you speak up? And when do you stay back so other people have a chance to speak up?

Mae's past experiences of being reprimanded for having a voice in class caused her to remain silent in most of the classes in her new master's program. Much like the others, she was using her silence as a form of protection against the majority of the class:

MAE: Why am I not more open? I don't know. I guess that you just kind of get jilted so you don't want it to happen again. I don't know. Like I said, I know it's irrational. It is. So I don't know.

Dave found that his ability to speak up in class was not effected by his minority identity. In fact, he found sharing with others was easy for him in part due to some of his first minority experiences:

DAVE: But yeah, when people talk to me, I'm usually really open about it... But I don't know, at least in my experience, after your second day in the hospital, you're usually pretty open because they're tossing you around and everybody's seeing things they shouldn't see and there's no privacy... So you either reject that or you say, 'Uh-hum. Hi, guys!'

Each of these participants reflected on their ability to speak and share in class. Some found that they did not feel safe or supported enough to speak in class. One similarity among all of those participants listed is their minority identities directly impact their willingness to be open and vocal within the counseling classroom.

Intentional self-disclosure. Along with the act of speaking about generalized topics within the classroom, participants also spoke about their choice to self-disclose personal information within the program or class. Some of the participants chose to self-disclose as soon as possible and then gauged the reactions of the faculty or other students. For example, Matthew explained how he chose to 'come out' during the initial interview to get into the counseling program and the conversation that occurred before that with his partner:

MATTHEW: We had a conversation for two or three days before the [interview] and he was like, 'Are you going to tell them why you came down here because there's only one reason why you came down here?' and 'So, how are you going to word that, what is it going to look like?' and at that point I was like, 'I'm just going to say it because I mean because that's going to be how it's going to be'. And so even in my interview they said 'Oh you're from [another state], what brought you [here]?' I flat out said, my partner moved and he's working at a hospital here, and so I followed him and they took it very well.

Olivia also commented on her choice to come out early on within her program:

OLIVIA: I'm very open. I never hide it. I always talk freely about my girlfriend and about the community and things that are going on and stuff like that. So people know that I am gay. I don't hide it, and I come out usually within the first week of class. Somehow I find a way, not on purpose. It just happens. So people know, in class, that I am a gay woman. It's not like I drop the bomb on them just because we brought up LGBT issues. They usually know before that... A lot of times, people can tell, again, because I'm androgynous. They just look at me, and they know. So sometimes I don't even have to verbalize coming out. I just am coming out by the way I dress and I present myself a lot of times.

A part of Rose's minority identity was her upbringing and previous lived experiences. Until enrolling in the counseling program, it appears she would openly talk about the lessons she had learned throughout her life. However, she was learning that there were different expectations within her counseling program and there was a chance of over-sharing:

ROSE: I find I'm not necessarily ridiculed but I find that I have to be careful about how much I self-disclose in class, so I'm not like, 'Yeah, when I was a kid...' but it's more like I talk about my feelings a lot because in a way, that's my way of connecting with people and there is a time and a place for that, and the classroom isn't always the time and place. That's something that I'm learning to be very mindful of and be very careful of.

The choice to self-disclose is very personal. For some minority students, their identities are physically seen. For others, a choice must be made- to reveal the concealed part of themselves, or remain hidden.

Awareness of effect of self on class/ others. As in previous subthemes, a minority student appears to have a greater awareness of their own effect on the class.

Awareness of effect of Self on Class/Others was a general synthesis of the experiences participants chose to share, however, only one participant spoke directly toward this theme. In the next round of interviews, I was tasked with either finding support for this

subtheme or editing it. Gee described how his choice to open up in a group counseling class led to a greater experience both for himself and his peers:

GEE: So at first I was guarded, but then in the group process, I began to open up and share about these things. Share about my brother and always comparing myself to my brother and so forth. Because of that, that helped other people to open up, too.

Fear of rejection. Within the experience of choosing to be open with peers and faculty, minority students have the fear of being rejected for their differences. Fear of Rejection was a general sense present within participants' stories, however Ysera and Rose's experiences were the most overt and representative of this theme. Ysera spoke about how their choice to reveal who they really were did not come until after they were accepted into the counseling program. Ysera's greatest fear was that they would offer a vulnerable part of themselves and the faculty would not know how to respond:

YSERA: So now when I interviewed and then I got accepted even during the interview session I still wasn't... I was still with the "she" pronoun even though I didn't like it. I was... I don't know, you are kind of scared. You are like what if I tell this interviewer, this professor who I'm going to have. I was like, "My pronouns are these." And they're like, "I don't know you're talking about," which I hope they won't say but I don't know everybody that's teaching so how will I know how they will react.

Ysera's fears also resonated with Rose's fear of being vulnerable within her program and not having a positive reaction to her self-disclosure:

ROSE: With some instructors, they don't provide an environment where I feel like I'm at liberty to open up that much, so I do have to be careful. In other classes, like my spirituality class, or I know crisis, trauma and loss which I had not taken yet - those types of classes where you're actually working through a lot of your own triggers in class and you're doing reflective papers and you're doing personal exploration - in that sort of sense, I feel that I'm much more able to open and self-disclose and go, 'Here is what it was like for me and this is why I am the way I am.'

Something that really stands out in these participants' stories is the importance of the faculty's reaction to self-disclosure. The choice to come out is not an easy one and if faculty dismiss the vulnerability present or ridicule the student, there may be long lasting effects on the experience of the student in their program. In addition, students who are not choosing to speak in class may be experiencing immense fear or lack of support. Perhaps a forced participation grade for these students is not culturally appropriate.

Critical incident/ defining moment. Without prompting, each participant shared a specific story that exemplified their perception of their experiences within their counseling master's program. While some experiences were affirming, others reinforced isolation. The idea of having critical incidents or defining moments is an essential theme because these stories were specifically related to how each participant experienced their time in the master's program.

Affirming/ confirming experience. Rose was the only participant who felt as though she had an affirming experience within her counseling program. She spoke about how her Buddhist beliefs were consistently confirming her choice to attend a Catholic university. She had talked about the similarities between her spirituality, the university and program's religious beliefs, and counseling:

ROSE: We talk about mind and body in counseling, too. We talk about the connection between mind and body, okay. Well, there are monks in Tibet that to go into the Himalayas that go in nothing but their robes, and they burn at 108 degrees and they don't die and they keep themselves warm and it's all in the head. So I'm going, 'Okay...' I had an instructor that had a lung problem and she was doing mind and body medicine with a friend of hers, and she introduced it into the class. She was able to control her breathing simply by mind over matter so to speak - so stuff like that. It's not overt. It's very subtle. It comes in when I least expect it... It's not just, 'Here is how I can justify making this decision.' It's more, 'Here is how I can enrich the decision that I've made, and here is how I know that it's perfect, because it's already there. I just have yet to notice it.' So yeah, that's it.

Isolating experience. More common than Rose's experience was a critical incident or defining moment that reinforced the isolation many of the minority students felt. Many of the moments the participants chose to share were directly related to their own minority identities. Gee described a moment he had with a White woman in his class:

GEE: I started off the conversation by saying, "We're a lot alike." She's a White older lady. I'm Black, of course. And she looked at me with, I can't even describe the look. I just felt like she was looking down on me and she was like, "We're nothing alike." I was like, wow. Before she even knew what I was really trying to say. And I'm like, "I'm so sorry," and I quickly walked away. But it really hurt me deeply.

The disappointing response of a fellow master's student was also described by Ysera. One of their minority identities was having a processing disorder. They described an experience they had with another member of their cohort on a social media website:

YSERA: I posted on Facebook this kind of chart, like, when is it okay to use the R-word and of course all going back to, "No, it's not okay." Then this person from my program commented and said, "This chart is..." and said the word and I was like, "Oh." I tried to inform him... I was like, "That word does hurt me," and then all my friends came on that have learning disabilities and they were like, "That's never okay to say," and then he deleted it. He was, like, not taking responsibility. I sent a message and I was like, "I just wanted to say one more time." He was like, "It was meant to be ironic," and I was like, "I understand, but no," and then he deleted me and I was like, "That's going fun for you maybe we have to be partners in class sometime."

Olivia explained an experience she had with some members of her cohort. They were assigned as partners for a group project and chose to meet at a local bookstore and coffee shop. The group members explained that a man that was sitting behind Olivia was staring at them and Olivia told the group it might be because the man was trying to figure out if she was a male or female. The group members dismissed this idea:

OLIVIA: So that was the first thing I thought. I kind of was embarrassed. Then I kind of got a little mad, like, 'Okay. They don't get it, because they're feminine women.' They're cisgender women and they dress feminine. They're not getting it because they're not looked at by society. They're looked at for different reasons, but they're not looked at like, 'Oh, is that a woman?' No, when people see them, they know they're a woman... So I was kind of like, 'You don't get it,' and that just kind of frustrated me a little bit. There was like all these stages I went through. Then it was like understanding, like, Okay.' They're not going to understand it. Don't get mad at them for not understanding.

Mary described a class when she volunteered to be a client while her professor modeled certain techniques. Volunteering was a big moment for her because she had often chosen to stay quiet within class. Unfortunately, Mary was disappointed with the reaction of her classmates:

MARY: And so, I opened up very personal to the entire class about stuff that I usually talk about with very close friends, with people that I trust. And there was a student in the classroom who I kind of felt went through the same thing, I can relate and that was the only thing. And after that no one was like, 'You know, thanks for sharing or talking.' I was just like, 'Oh, okay.'

Mae spoke about her previous counseling program and the backlash she received for bringing attention to what she believed was unethical practices by a faculty member:

MAE: So they took away my practicum experience and it was just like it wasn't appropriate and I felt like they were doing this because I was different. I feel like because I was questioning their religion a little bit and their right to use religion in the classroom despite being a religious university, because I did bring that up, I felt like they just used that to start something and created a bigger deal than it really was and then take away my practicum rights. Since they were going to take it away for a full year I just decided to transfer anyways. It just wasn't a good environment and it sucked.

Beth's minority status also contributed to an isolating experience. Her story occurred at her internship site, which has previously been a safe place for her to explore the intersection of her religious values and the LGBTQ communities. This occurrence, however, did not feel safe for Beth and she explained how her supervisor seemed to be

trying to persuade her to stray from her church even though Beth already held different beliefs about sexual orientation than what her church taught:

BETH: One example is with my supervisor at my site, she is very much like... I would say tries to be understanding of the LDS culture, is open to that, but also I felt like lots of comments that she would make were trying to let me know that my way of thinking was wrong. For example, I had a client that was gay and because maybe I'm not as familiar with that, I think that I made a comment one time in one of my notes that said she was LDS and she had said that because she chose a different lifestyle, that her family didn't accept her. I had written that in my notes and my supervisor assumed that I had made that comment like it was a choice that she was gay and I was making that assumption. And it wasn't ill intended on her part at all but I just would get undertones a lot of like, 'I wonder when people are going to realize that this is not a choice' and I felt like it wasn't like she was really making those comments. I think that's what she really believed but I felt like she was trying to educate me out of my religion and culture when that's already something that I feel, you know?

Many of the experiences that stood out for the participants were isolating. Each isolating experience revolved around a minority identity that was being dismissed or ridiculed. Although many of the participants had some positive stories to share, their most potent experiences were surrounding isolation.

Relational experience. Two of the experiences that were shared were more relational than isolating. Although both occurrences might not have improved relations between the student and their peers, the relationship was of utmost importance. Matthew described how a student asked him to be a part of a presentation for a conference specializing in LGBTQ populations:

MATTHEW: Last year we got a new batch of counseling students of course. I didn't know them from Adam because I was in different classes and we met at a meet and greet, and so I introduced myself and what not and the next day one of the students came to my office and she says 'Can I talk to you? Do you have a minute?' I said sure and she says, 'So, you're gay right?' and I said, 'Yes.' She's like 'that is great because we want to do a presentation for the association of LGBT issues in counseling and we have a great idea but we don't have a gay person in our group.' And I was like 'Okay, what's your idea?' [...] It's so funny that I was essentially the token gay like they wanted some legitimacy to their

research by having a gay person in the group... It worked out well. But I guess in another context you might be hurt.

Although Matthew stated that it was funny to be the “token gay,” he also acknowledged that in a different context he could have been hurt by the experience. Amy spoke about an experience she had in class. Similar to Matthew’s story, she stated the experience was funny, and also implied that it was uncomfortable:

AMY: At the end of our class last week or a couple of weeks ago everybody had to write down their favorite song before we left class and for class last week our professor played the song and we had to guess everybody in the class like who picked which song. So she went through all the songs like two minutes of each song and we had to guess who picked that song. And then like advertisements would come on because she was playing Pandora and it would be like a Beach Boys song in the advertisement and everybody looks at me. Just anything that wasn't hip-hop or R&B. I got guessed for like five different songs, because they wouldn't expect a Black person to pick something that would be a White song or something like that. I was like okay. It draws a lot of unwanted attention, but now it's just I guess since I've known them over the semester it's kind of funny. Just take it as it is.

The experiences that the participants chose to share were often involving their minority identities. Whether affirming, isolating, or relational, participants had a very specific moment that stood out to them as the crux of their master’s counseling experience. It appears faculty, supervisors, and peers have a large influence on how students experience their time within counseling programs.

Quitting/ questioning. Thinking of quitting the counseling program and/or questioning their aptitude to be a counselor was not an uncommon theme for some of the participants. Dave’s critical incident and his questioning moment were one in the same. He described a mock client he was given in his skills class:

DAVE: There came a point in the semester where I was like, man, I don't know if I can do this. Because I got thrown this really, really depressed guy. Like super depressed. And I've been there before. And you know, it's just regulating that affect. And it hits you like a ton of bricks. Sadly the professors, they pick those

pretty strategically to see how we react. It's their job to judge us in a way. And yeah, I was talking with another kid in my class who's actually legally blind. He's like, he said the same thing to myself. 'Man. I got really depressed in the middle of the semester.' I did not know if I could do this.... It was the first two sessions, they hit us hard. And then the third session, I think they told the doctoral students to let up on us a little bit. [laughs] So it kind of naturally lifted us. But no, learning the skills by doing them is so much different than reading a theory book.

Gee, Ysera, and Mae had experiences that led them to question whether they should continue in the program and if they should quit counseling. Gee stated, "...I also have this third thing that's called my critical voice. It started running in my head and said, 'You don't belong here. You don't fit in. You shouldn't be doing this.'" Ysera's critical voice was also evident: "They're like, 'Oh, you are like the T word. Oh, ha, ha, you are the R word. You're all these things,' and when it comes together they're just like, 'You are so flawed and you are so wrong. How could you get this far?'" Mae's experience in her first master's program also led her to self-doubt, "It just really made me question everything that I was... I really questioned even continuing in this program and stuff like that or like even being a counselor." Although each participant was driven to becoming a counselor, they had brief moments of self-doubt that seemed to occur because of others' reactions to their minority identity.

Although the essential theme of **Quitting/ Questioning** is potent, all ten participants did not speak to it. For the sake of the first round of interviews and themes, I have listed it as an essential theme. However, in the first member check and second round of interviews, I ascertained if this theme should be cut or perhaps listed as an incidental theme.

Responsibility. Each participant, except Mae, spoke about a sense of responsibility. Some had a responsibility to succeed to themselves. Others saw their

minority identities as a responsibility to educate majority people, advocating for their minority, or speaking as a member of a minority. Finally, some participants spoke about the responsibility they held to others.

To self. Beth, Gee, and Dave described the sense of responsibility they had to themselves:

BETH: I feel like I have to be the person to stand up for people outside the church or like, with my mom. I have to stand up and say, 'You know you can't really be the judge, Mom, of that person. You don't know what that person's been through. You don't know what their experiences are. Only God can be the one that knows that person and he cares about them way more than you or I.' But those are things that... Like, at church when stuff comes up and people are talking about people who drink or people who smoke or people who swear or whatever it is. And I'm like, 'We all have our stuff.' I'm defending people at church, so I feel isolated at church sometimes. And then I would go to my practicum or school and feel like I'm now defending my religious faith and who I am in those contexts. And I felt alone like I don't fit anywhere...

GEE: I'm not going to school just to pass classes. I'm going to excel at classes. I want to be the best. I want to be in the top 5% of the graduating class, not just settle for a passing grade, because I'm invested in learning.

DAVE: I tell my professors I said, 'I want you guys to hammer on me just like you hammer on anyone else.' I said I need it... And I said, 'You know, I really want to meet the same deadlines as everyone else in this program. I think it's good practice for what it will be like working for an agency or whatever.'

Beth had a sense of responsibility to defend others, her beliefs, her religion, and the LGBTQ communities. This sense of responsibility is to others, but also pivotal in her self-view. Gee and Dave, on the other hand, spoke about their responsibility to do well within their counseling program and how they were unwilling to take shortcuts, even if they were offered.

To educating majority. Within the minority identity, there seemed to be a sense of responsibility to educating the majority about the minority. Beth had described that in

the previous section. Ysera explained how they felt the need to put others' thoughts and feelings into perspective so they could spark change instead of resistance:

YSERA: So I'll try my best to show them that if you want to have a conversation about this you can talk to me about it... I'm just so upset and I know that the best responses don't come from snap decisions. So it comes from, like, let's get centered, let's kind of think about what are we going to say to this person and is it going to help or hinder the situation.

During the first member check and second round of interviews, I worked to find if this subtheme resonated for other participants. Otherwise, I may have needed to cut it or add it to another section. This will be further explored in Chapter Four.

To advocacy of minority. Similar to educating the majority, participants had a sense of responsibility to advocating on behalf of the minority to which they belonged. The choice to become a counselor seemed congruent with the need to support their minority group. Matthew and Beth discussed the responsibility they feel in their counseling classrooms:

MATTHEW: I feel like in almost every class, I've had to ask myself, is it my responsibility to be the representative of the minority in my class? And I always sort of challenge the class and see if anybody else is going to say anything. Like is somebody going to mention gay kids? Or is the gay guy going to mention gay kids or gay clients? And so far I'm the one who brings it up... it's a little frustrating that I have to bring it up. I think that that has been when I felt the most marginalized I guess and it's interesting because it is not harmful. I don't feel threatened. I feel disappointed I guess.

BETH: I think I've tried to be less like, 'It's not your responsibility to fix everybody's perception of the LDS church,' but I do feel like there's a lot of misconceptions about it just like people in the church have a lot of misconceptions about people who don't go to church or who drink or who are gay or who, whatever. So I always feel like it's my responsibility because I am LDS to be different or to live it in a way that feels congruent with me. But I make mistakes too. I'm sure that I'm judgmental of people over things at times so it's not like I have it down perfect or anything.

Matthew and Beth spoke about their innate feelings of advocacy for the LGBTQ communities and the LDS church respectively. There appears to be a lack of faculty members attending to these communities and as both students felt the responsibility laid on them. Olivia also discussed her responsibility to advocate for the LGBTQ communities and how that responsibility led her to counseling:

OLIVIA: There's constant discrimination against the LGBT community, and that's probably never going to go away, or it's going to take a very long time to get to a place where it's gone. So in the meantime, I could be like a safety net to try to help people pass through, make life little easier. So that's kind of where I came from with the LGBT, like wanting to go into counseling for LGBT individuals.

Of speaking as a member of the minority. For some of the participants, the responsibility they felt came from the act of speaking in class a member of a minority. The students did not want their experiences to be applied other members of their minority. Mary, Matthew, and Olivia explained the sense of responsibility they felt in class:

MARY: I don't feel like there's been micro-aggressions or anything like that. But it's more like being able to feel comfortable in speaking up like what I think as a Latina or my cultural background. I don't always feel comfortable being able to express that. I truly am for the most part but because I'm the only one, I don't want to represent an entire world or culture.

MATTHEW: I always want to say, 'This is me and this is by my experience, this won't be everybody's experience but you should certainly utilize the person that you have in front of you and this is what I'll offer up.' Sometimes you worry like I'm not the gay guru on the mountain. I'm not speaking for all Indians. You want to make sure to put that little asterisk on it.

OLIVIA: My body language changes. I'm thinking a lot more than I usually am, especially because there's this feeling too of when I speak as a gay woman, I'm speaking for every gay person out there, even though it shouldn't be that way, but unfortunately that's how it comes across. Its like, 'Well, I had a gay classmate who said this. So therefore, it applies to all gay people.' So that's a lot of pressure. I need to present myself in a way that is responsible and makes the community look good. Because if I say something that's unintelligent or not

politically correct or not up to date, that's a reflection not only on me but on the community.

It appears along with the responsibility of having a voice while feeling like a minority, the participants felt fear within the classroom. Matthew used the word 'worry', Olivia used 'pressure', and Mary seemed to explain this phenomenon succinctly: "I don't want to represent an entire world or culture." The responsibility they felt was not a benefit to their experience.

To others. In a more generalized sense, some participants expressed the responsibility they felt toward other people. There did not appear to be specific people to whom the participants felt responsible, instead it was a broader sense of responsibility to matter within their programs. Gee discovered his sense of responsibility was not helpful in that he could not always help others and not help himself, "But also another thing is that I had to realize that it's not my responsibility to help everybody. Sometimes I need not to offer. I need to wait for people to ask." Both Rose and Amy expressed their wish to have a positive impact on their class:

ROSE: I have been labeled an overachiever and a perfectionist so that's interesting for me. I want to strive to be the best I can be and I really appreciate it when other students come up to me and they're going, 'Hey, do you have the answer to this question that I have?' or, 'I was really struggling with this. I just need an ear right now,' and I'm like, 'Yeah, this feels good to just be here.'

AMY: So we have to write a lot of journal articles and reflections and it's like I'm just so appreciative to be exposed to this and I'm going to take what I can from it. And then I hope I can add something to it. Even though I'm only one person that hopefully my classmates can get something from it as well.

Many of the participants shared the sense of responsibility they felt within their counseling master's program. Some had a responsibility to themselves, to others, or to their minority identity. Participants' minority identity compounded the sense of

responsibility students felt. Mae's experience of **Responsibility** will be explored during the first member check and second round of interviews.

Relationship with minority status. Perhaps the most prevalent theme in the experiences of self-identified minority students was the relationship they had with their minority identity. Some participants had a lifetime of identifying as a minority to pull resources and coping skills. Others had only just become a minority and until that point had identified with the majority. Some of the participants saw themselves as minorities due to the physical representation of other people like themselves within their program. Other participants chose the minority identifier due to systemic and social oppression. The relationship each participant had with their minority identity greatly impacted their experiences within their counseling programs.

Length of time. Some of the participants spoke about the length of time they had identified as a minority. It seemed as though the people who had a newer minority identity were more likely to discuss their experiences in terms of time. Ysera, for example, had only come out and transgender to their parents a couple weeks before our first interview:

YSERA: I'll start with gender identity first because it's been a long road. I just came up to my parents two weeks ago, just had a conversation with my dad but he was like, "Your mum is not really handling this well and she is being kind of weird."... It was overall good, anything where you are not being kicked out or your funding for school is taken away or you are disowned is good to me. I was like thinking about all my friends who rely on donations mostly because they are on the streets. I'm like that's not me, so it's good.

Ysera was in the first semester of their counseling program while simultaneously also coming to terms with their gender identity and choosing to come out. They had come out to people within the counseling program before they chose to come out to their

parents. Dave was also somebody who was still coming to terms with his minority identity. He spoke about his relationship with his minority status:

DAVE: Since my injuries, recently, are fairly new, about three and a half years out from my car accident, I've thought about this and I talked about this in our multiculturalism class a little bit how he made us do an assignment where we write down 10 things. Ten things that describe ourselves. Just one-word deals. Pretty basic deal. And I found myself going down the list and I was, he asked us after that, he's like, 'What did you write down and what did you think of it?' And I said, you know, I really attributed, I was having a really hard time differentiating and attributing my new identity as someone in a wheelchair. I found myself writing nothing but physical characteristics down. It was really interesting.

Rose and Amy had previously seen themselves as members of the majority group.

Rose was in a city that had a high population of Buddhist people and Amy was a White person who was not only in the majority numerically, but also had the innate privilege.

Rose spoke about the transition from being a majority member to being a minority:

ROSE: Nobody really ever says, 'Oh, Rose, you're in a Catholic school. Why are you Buddhist?' Nobody has ever said that. Nobody has ever been like, 'Wow, you don't believe in God? Jeez, what's wrong with you?' It's more like, 'Wow, tell me more about your experience.' Now the tables are flipped where [city] is a very heavily Buddhist-oriented community... There's a big Tibetan diaspora here. Tibetans in exile come here a lot because of the community and so I'm used to being the majority, but now that I'm at [university] and that's consuming almost all my time, the tables are turned a little bit.

Amy recognized her privilege while also grappling with what it meant to be the only White person in her program. She was experiencing herself as a minority for the first time in her life:

AMY: And then like when I got your email I was like oh that's not for me. And then I was like oh wait, it is actually like it's just the opposite of what I would think. Yes, this is the first time I've ever been in a situation like this.

Past minority experience. Mary had experience as a minority for a majority of her life. She was able to relate her minority identity in her counseling program to past

experiences in order to garner resilience. She compared previous discrimination to her experiences in her counseling program:

MARY: And then going to college, I was the only... one of the few Hispanic girls in the school so a lot of times I ended up being like the one Latina student in the classroom or the one non-White student in the classroom at all for all three years. And that's where I had some of my biggest experiences [as a minority] because I was finally like in a big community where I was more the minority where I have to adapt to other people's culture, to another language and that's where I really experienced a lot of micro-aggressions and blatant racism from my peers, from my professors, from the administration.

Level of comfort with minority group. Gee, Matthew, and Olivia had identified as minorities previous to their enrollment in their counseling programs. Within their past experiences, they each developed a level of comfort or discomfort with their minority identities. Gee explained how he did not know where he fit, but that he could portray acceptable behaviors for both White and Black communities:

GEE: ...because of my education and my intelligence and my (lighter) skin color, I didn't fit in in the Black neighborhood... So I felt like I was cornered between both worlds... I felt like I wanted to break the stereotype, but then when I deal with people that are my own color, I feel judged and so forth. So I don't feel like I fit in in either place, but I can fit in in both places because I have the mask to do that. I can turn my hat to the side and talk slick and cool and whatever when I go into a bad neighborhood. I have that ability to be that chameleon, but I also can talk intelligently in class and with owners of companies and CEOs and presidents of universities and so forth. So that's one of the things that I need to work on, finding the balance for me, and to be who I am, and not change who I am because of who I'm around.

Matthew had a similar experience of choosing who he was and how he presented based on how he thought he would be accepted. He spoke about how he knew others might easily identify some of his minority identities, but that he had to choose how much he let others see:

MATTHEW: There are some assumptions or some preliminary planning or ideas that come with every interaction, and so I think that marginalized students are keenly aware or maybe even more so than some students of the same privilege or

power of those assessments that are happening. And sort of how am I presenting and this idea of, as soon as I go into the room I know that there's going to be some evaluation, because I'm evaluating and so I assume that they evaluate to. What am I ready to show? So I think that's sort of to be expected and to be negotiated. It can be hard and it can be painful for some people. I know there are times in the past where it was and I did a lot of image monitoring or image policing of myself. See all of high school and middle school for more information.

Olivia spoke about the pride she felt in her minority identity. She had a support system that accepted her identity and she was able to utilize that support as a means of resilience in her program:

OLIVIA: My mother and my father have always been supportive of me. It wasn't easy when I first came out. I'm not going to say that. It took some time for them to adjust, but they were never like, 'This is a sin. You're disgusting. You can't bring anyone around.' It was never like that for me. So I think knowing that I had the love and support of my parents who... That's all any kid ever wants, is the love and support of their parents... So I think definitely knowing that I have a base to lean if, say, someone's mean to me in class, or I have a professor who's an asshole to me. I can lean on my friends and my family. I know they've got my back.

Level of comfort with majority group. While the level of comfort within the minority group itself was important, it also became clear the level of comfort with the majority group was an important component of student experiences. Some participants felt persecuted by the majority group. Others believed they might not fit in with the majority group. Mae explained how, often, the majority (religious people) may not understand her minority status:

MAE: When I told my fiancé that I was doing this, he was like 'You're not a minority,' and I was like 'Well, no, I'm a White female.' I mean I guess females are minorities but I'm not a racial minority or anything like that. Atheism isn't sometimes seen as a minority by people. I don't think people really understand that we are targeted and we are judged and it's not just by Christians. It's by every single religion. Islam thinks that we are infidels and stuff like that. It is a minority and I really do feel like it is, even though some people might say it's not.

Beth described how, although many people in her program identified as the same religions as her, she was still a minority due to her personal lived experiences and beliefs.

She had a minority identity within her programmatic majority and societal minority:

BETH: I do identify as LDS. I was not raised around here though like a lot of people in the program are so there are things about... sometimes I feel like I get lumped into a group of people when my experiences within the religious context are different so my way of maybe expressing it or it may be even my thoughts on certain things are a little bit different even though I've been given that label.

Until she enrolled in her master's program, Amy had always identified with the majority group with privilege. In her university, however, she was a numerical minority.

She explained how her experience involved thinking about herself in an entirely new light:

AMY: But now I'm like, oh my gosh, is this how that one Asian in my whatever class felt. Did they feel like everybody was staring at them or you know? And another thing like everybody knows my name. Like everybody knows who I am. Like I get on the elevator and like 'Hey Amy' and I'm like 'Hey.'

Amy continues to explain her complicated relationship with being a part of the privileged majority while making meaning of being a minority within her university. She sees the privilege White people have within the United States, however she has a difficult time identifying with the term 'privileged':

AMY: But if you think that I have all the reasons why I'm not you know privileged, but I mean I am privileged. It's just I'm privileged just by the fact that I'm White, but my parents didn't give me everything. But I didn't go without. So I mean that's being privileged as well. I am, but for some reason I get defensive and I want to tell you all the reasons I'm not. There's no reason for it. I don't know why I don't want to be that person or in that situation. I want to be on an even playing field. I don't want to be above or below.

The relationship participants had with their minority identity indicated their ability to make meaning within their counseling programs. While some participants were identifying as a minority for the first time, others had developed coping skills based on

years of oppression or societal ‘otherness’. Comfort within the minority status and among the majority group in the counseling programs appeared as a large part of the experiences of these students in their counseling programs.

Cultural norms. Nine participants spoke about their experience of navigating their own cultural norms with those of the counseling profession. Mae’s experience with **Cultural Norms** will be explored during the first member check and the second round of interviews. Some participants saw counseling norms as oppressive. Others struggled to integrate counseling norms with their own cultural beliefs. The participants’ minority experiences were being balanced with appropriate disclosure in a field that honors congruence and a fixed view of professionalism.

Counseling micro aggressions. There are a few norms that have been set forth by counseling and counselor education as a profession that are culturally insensitive to minority students. Ysera spoke about the inherent gender binary bias in professional attire, “I’m just saying professionalism to me seems like to have a lot of issues because it means you can afford *these* clothes and you can look *this* way and everyone will look the same.” Matthew highlighted how certain phrases faculty used in class were heteronormative, “... the faculty sort of say off hand to connect the students like ‘You understand, remember that time we used to pick on the girls because you liked them?’ and you’re like ‘No’.” Olivia explained the biased nature in the widespread counseling term “marriage counseling”:

OLIVIA: So marriage is one thing that might come up. There’s marriage counseling. But does that really include LGBT individuals? Because not every state has marriage equality yet. So they use the word “marriage,” but for a gay couple, they might not legally be married, but they’re committed to each other. So do you consider that a married couple? Who’s coming to marriage counseling? [...] Pretty much in all of my classes, when they refer to marriage, they’re

referring to a man and a woman, I've noticed, which is also really unfortunate because there are states now that have gotten marriage equality for same-sex couples. So it's no longer limited to one man, one woman. They could be two women or two men.

Counseling norms vs. cultural norms. Mary and Matthew explained how the openness that may be an expectation in counseling differs than their cultural norms. Mary talked about how her Latina mother often asked about the counseling program, but Mary did not feel as though she could gain advice from her mother because her mother would not understand Mary's experience:

MARY: I'm like, 'Well, what am I going to tell you, what can you tell me to like make this better?' Not that she wouldn't be able to understand. I just don't need more pressure from her telling me, 'Well, you should do this. You should do that.' I just don't want more pressure. Especially my parents are being supportive, unconditionally about grad school about work, about anything that I want or that I need.

Similarly, Matthew explained how his Native American culture did not blend well with the expectations existent within counseling:

MATTHEW: It was tough because it's a lot of challenging yourself to be interpersonal and challenge yourself to be reflective and empathetic and doing those things. And I knew that I'm fighting my sort of tribal insular culture and my poverty culture to sort of isolate and be insular and not be...what I would think of as prying. So that was the challenge. It was like you are not prying you are caring.

Value conflict/ sense of self as counselor. Some participants had conflicting experiences. It seemed as though their personhood was not integrating well into the cultural norms and expectations of counseling and their master's programs. Mary explained how her values did not align with the values that seemed present among her cohort:

MARY: I don't know how to explain culture norms or culture background and be like, 'You know, I still live with my parents,' and not feel kind of ashamed about it because in my culture that's normal. We don't leave until we get married. Even

little things like that, having to explain myself all the time and be like, 'Wait, I know you have your own apartment, you're younger than me. But like in my culture that's okay.' Just not having to explain all the time.

Beth described how her religious identity and developing LGBTQ competency were challenged within her program. She believed that her ability to counsel members of the LGBTQ communities was not dependent on the religious values with which she was associated. She stated that she felt as though her professors were condemning her belief system without first asking her what she believed and listening to counter-beliefs in a non-judgmental way:

BETH: How do I be in my religion that I value and love and make sense of this other stuff and bring understanding to other people when I think a lot of the times the stuff from certain professors or certain people is like, 'We need to fix these people of their wrong way of thinking.' It seems like it's almost reverse discrimination of that, like, we can't tell other people how to live their lives and what's right or wrong but we're going to tell the LDS people that what they believe which is homosexuality is a sin, is wrong.

Amy shared how she was experiencing value conflict for the first time. Due to her new minority identity, she was seeing the world in a way that she had not had the opportunity to before:

AMY: It's making me think differently. I've always been pretty easy going to begin with, but I mean and I think more so than the further I get into this program it's kind of hard to be around a lot of other White people. Like it was hard to be around some White people to begin with or just people in general to begin with, but just like you have friends that just say things without thinking and now when they say things it's just like ... It's a little uncomfortable at first, but now you know you're really making me uncomfortable. You can't just say things, you're hurting people. It makes you look at just diversity and any kind of 'isms.

The value conflict and convergence of beliefs and counseling values was a standout experience for some of the participants. They were still in the process of finding a way to synthesize what they had been taught with what they had previously or currently believed.

Sharing the minority experience. Many participants spoke about how they believed that sharing their personal experiences was culturally appropriate. However, they were learning in their counseling programs that self-disclosure with a client was to be intentional. Sharing experiences and giving advice were cultural norms that were no longer accepted in their new career paths. Gee talked about how he was used to showing his emotions and reactions and that he wanted to learn to withhold some of that information when working with clients:

GEE: So that's what I have to learn, I have to learn how to have a blank face so my emotions aren't showing. I have to be aware of when there's some transference, counter-transference going on, but I think the most important thing I'm learning is that I don't always have to let somebody else processing something that they go through, I don't always have to relate that to one of my experiences to be able to share with that person's empathy. Because I'm leaving the present and going into my past and not being attentive to what they're processing. So that's one of the best lessons that I'm learning.

Both Dave and Rose discussed how their previous lived experiences were a source of strength for them and how they wanted to share what they had learned with their clients. They both realized, however, that the role of the counselor was not to give advice, though it seemed as though advice giver was a role they had taken in the past. Rose described her ability to relate to her clients because she had experienced a lot throughout her life:

ROSE: I've lived a lot of this junk and I know what it's like to be able to impart the information that I learned growing up, and how I feel, and how I know what it's like to suffer, and I know what it's like to have a jerk make fun of you or whatever and how horrible that feels, so I didn't want to be that.

Dave explained how he had the urge to give clients advice, but that there was an expectation for him to allow the client to explore their own answers:

DAVE: I'm happy to share my experiences. I think that's part of the drive too that I've got to realize as a counselor is take the focus off me and really put it on the

client. It's their experience. It's their know-how, Yeah, I have a lot, probably a lot of good advice to offer, but that's kind of a big no-no.

Ysera spoke about how they were realizing that the focus of counseling was different than the focus in a conversation between friends. They were learning how to help others while remaining congruent and appropriate with sharing their own past trauma history:

YSERA: I was like, "Can I face this? Can I even help someone in this situation?" And as much as I was hurting for them, I was okay. I didn't cry, breakdown. I was like, "Let's get to business." Like, "Let me help you out whatever I can." The focus was not on me or my feelings. It was just right on them.

The experience of cultural norms interacting with the belief systems present in counseling and within counseling programs was a point of contention for some participants. Some norms within counseling felt like micro-aggressions. Other participants felt as though they were being asked to change a key component of their personhood.

Expectations. Many of the participants spoke about an expectation of others. Dave's experience with Expectations was explored within the first member check and second round of interviews. There seemed to be an idea that counselors, counselors in training, and counselor educators would be more socially aware, respectful, and educated about minority populations. Unfortunately, for some of the participants, this expectation was not met.

Counselors/faculty. Active counselors and counselor educators were expected to model ethical and culturally competent behavior. The safety one might expect in a counseling session was also expected within the classroom. Mae explained how behavior

that would be deemed unethical by the American Counseling Association if evidenced in a counseling session was very present in her counseling classroom:

MAE: I was kind of like the client in the class and he was like the therapist, if you could put it that way. The therapist is not supposed to preach to the client and he was. I was just trying to receive knowledge from him and information and he just kind of pushed his own beliefs in there.

Olivia expressed her expectation that counselor educators and counselors would be allies to the LGBTQ communities:

OLIVIA: But pretty much going into the counseling program, I already figured most of the professors would be allies for the LGBT Community, at least I would hope. I don't really know why you go into counseling and not be supportive of diverse people.

Beth described how she expected there to be a general sense of safety within the classroom. While she placed some of the responsibility on the students, she also wondered about the ability of counselor educators to foster safety:

BETH: But it's interesting though that as a bunch of counselors in training, sometimes we in our sessions might be able to create that environment but we don't do it in our classroom and that's on the pitfall of the students and sometimes even maybe people that are running the show.

Matthew explained that he felt a general push within his program toward LGBTQ inclusion; however, there were still logistical issues in practice. He described how he expected a better-rounded teaching curriculum that focused on all populations of people:

MATTHEW: And I always sort of challenge the class and see if anybody else is going to say anything. Like is somebody going to mention gay kids? Or is the gay guy going to mention gay kids or gay clients? And so far I'm the one who brings it up. I feel...one that's good because then we are talking about it, and it's a conversation that happened in the classroom. Two, it's a little frustrating that I have to bring it up. I think that that has been when I felt the most marginalized I guess and it's interesting because it is not harmful. I don't feel threatened. I feel disappointed I guess. Does that make sense?

Peers/ counselors in training. Similar to Beth's sentiments, Mary and Olivia spoke about how they had an expectation of peers and counselors in training to be responsible advocates. Mary spoke about how she was shocked by the lack of connection in her peers, "We're in a counseling program and people are supposed to be more empathetic, and kind of reach out more, listen." Olivia also expressed her disappointment with her peers and their lack of awareness:

OLIVIA: That can be a little bit disheartening sometimes, especially as a counselor or going to be a future counselor, in a room with other future counselors, that maybe they're missing some subtle, not discrimination, but just things that maybe they should pick up on, but they're not going to because they're not really a part of the community.

Rose had similar expectations, but they seemed to have been met by her peers. She explained how she wanted to self-disclose personal information because she felt a sense of safety from her classmates:

ROSE: I think that comes, too, with being in a roomful of counselors in training and you just want to talk to people, because you're like, 'Oh man, this is a horrible day I had today,' and you want to share that with each other.'

Gee described how he was upset at the way his classmates chose to treat each other within class. He suggested that a forum to discuss appropriate behavior for master's students would be helpful for his peers. He used an example of "teasing" within his cohort:

GEE: There's one girl in my class who was talking about how she blushed really easily and it makes her embarrassed, so why would another classmate tease her about blushing then? So having some types of rules and checks and balances in that process, in a group process, I think should be important especially if the instructor or professor isn't going to address it immediately. This one guy was teasing her about blushing when she just talked about, that's a huge problem for her. I just didn't, I don't understand it, I didn't agree with it because that process could be dangerous for some people like myself...

Amy spoke about her positive experience with her peers. She felt as though her classmates were open and willing to learn from each other regardless of personal beliefs or values. She shared her expectation that students would be open because of their master's level status:

AMY: Everyone seems pretty open and even people with strong convictions are just really open to listening to anything. I haven't seen any judgment towards it or any malice or anything. Everyone's really patient and I'm just assuming because its grad school that everyone's just open to learning more about other people.

Ysera shared an experience she witnessed with a peer. The student was presenting a project to the class and began crying. Ysera explained the empathy she had for the student and how scary it must have been for her even in front of counselor-in-training. This exemplified the expectation that Ysera's classmates would be perhaps safer due to their interest in counseling:

YSERA: And I was just like, "Oh, my goodness," imagine being in front of a classroom and doing that and you are not sure if people are going to be like... even if it as counseling program, people are going to be like, "Oh, no," or feel like, "What's happening?"

Participants held expectations for the counselors, counselor educators, and counselors in training within their programs. There was a generalized idea that people within the field of counseling would be more accepting and culturally competent than people outside of the field. Unfortunately, for many participants that was not the case. Rather, micro-aggressions and oppressive behaviors were evidenced regardless of the professional orientation of people.

Conclusion

The first round of interviews and coding resulted in nine essential themes and various incidental subthemes. The nine essential themes were: **Past Trauma/Lived**

Experiences/Minority Experiences, Support and Validation, Congruence/Coming Out/Being Open, Critical Incident/Defining Moment, Quitting/Questioning, Responsibility, Relationship with Minority Status, Cultural Norms, and

Expectations. Each participant related a story of an experience that fit within the nine essential themes. Overall, there is a large effect on students who identify as minorities within master's counseling programs. The next step in the research was to present the themes to the participants and hear their reaction and thoughts. This helped consolidate the themes into a more accurate representation of the participants' experiences. The member check, second round of interviews, and revised themes will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter IV

Second Round and Member Check

Introduction

The second round of interviews coincided with the first member check. As a constructivist researcher, I asked the participants to determine if their experiences were fully discussed. Some participants believed they had accurately related their minority experience and, therefore, we continued onto the member check. Others had new experiences to discuss or realized they had more to share, and we then completed another round as well as the member check. Before we met, I sent the first round themes and subthemes to each participant (Appendix D). They were asked to read through the themes and quotes, paying special attention to the placement of their own quotes. From their reactions, I was then able to edit the first round themes in order to better create an overall understanding of each participant's experience. The following sections are participant reactions to the themes and quotes that were provided, additional support for various themes, the themes that were deleted or edited to include more information, and a new table representing the changes.

Member Check and Impact of First Round Themes

The member check began with eight questions that were constructed after the first round of interviews. The questions were kept broad enough to allow for greater reflection from the participants on their experiences. The eight questions are presented below:

- 1.) What are your reactions to the themes?
- 2.) What are your reactions to the quotes I pulled?
- 3.) What is missing?
- 4.) What would you change?

- 5.) How has your experience been since our first interview?
- 6.) What do you think you need me to know in order to really understand your experience?
- 7.) What would the overall theme of your master's experience be for you?
- 8.) Do you have any artistic/creative examples of your experience?

The participants shared their opinions about the themes and quotes that were sent to them. Some participants spoke about their reaction to reading the experiences of other minority master's students. This was not surprising, as many participants had expressed the wish to find other students who shared in their minority experiences. Each participant also stated they agreed with the themes presented. When asked what they would change about the themes, all of the participants said they would not change anything. Through their continued sharing of their experiences, however, some themes have been refined.

Reactions to other participants. Mary spoke about her uncertainty and wondered if her experiences were as potent as some of the other participants. Although she agreed she had experiences within each theme, she did not know if her experience was as "drastic" as others':

MARY: It was interesting to see how diverse the group is across different areas, and I'm not sure. When I was reading, I'm like, "Hmm." I'm not sure my experiences are like that, doesn't seem like that drastic compared to some of the other experiences that kind of seem too step out a little bit.

Amy's reaction was similar to Mary's. Amy also talked about how other participants seemed to have a much harder time in their programs. Amy realized her experiences were in line with what the others shared:

AMY: I was just interested in the people. You know, we're in a counseling program and they're having so much trouble being accepted or feeling accepted for who they are. And I guess that's the whole reason I'm doing it as well.

Ysera spoke about their general reaction to the themes and quotes. They explained what had been written fit their experience and reading the quotes from the other participants was “impactful”:

YSERA: The quotes that you picked did make sense for the themes that I think they were right under them. You have a theme and then you had some quotes from everyone. I felt the quotes for other people even though I don't know them personally were very impactful. I thought they were all making sense for the categories they were under and kind of like the content of the statements.

Matthew, Beth, and Rose explored the recognition they felt when reading everyone else's stories. There seemed to be a sense of solidarity among the minority students who could see themselves within other participant's stories. Rose summarized the experience through the word “connection.”

ROSE: I tried to see myself in their shoes and tried to connect with other people through their quotes. More so than the themes. The themes were amazing, but the quotes themselves were so visceral and real and alive and passionate and sad and happy, and it was really, really cool to connect. I feel with people in that way, knowing everybody else was reading mine, too, and so, yeah, this is really neat to see that.

Matthew spoke about his reaction to seeing other people who might have experienced the same things as a minority as he did, “I think that maybe some of the people had some similar experiences, which was kind of interesting.” Beth's experience was similar to Matthew's. She described the shock she had when reading through the first round of themes, “So I think, like, some of my reaction to the others to, like, reading some of the other stuff is that sometimes I came across things where it was like I didn't realize there were other people who maybe had similar experiences as I did.”

Reaction to themes and quotes. The member check was centralized around the participants' reactions to the themes and quotes. Each person confirmed the essential and

incidental themes presented. Ysera found Quitting/Questioning and Support or Validation with Peers or Faculty the most potent aspects of the themes:

YSERA: All of them did fit. I'm sorry if I'm just kind of like... I'm not trying to be like, "Oh, appeasing." It did make sense. When I saw them, I was like, "Yep, yep," and then when I read other peoples quotes, I was like, "Mm-hmm." It was refreshing because I was like, "Okay. Wow! This actually..." This is what...When I'm talking, that's what it means. When I talk to about this and then thinking about quitting, questioning what's happening, relationships with people in the cohort or with the professors, and I was like, "Yeah."

Matthew and Dave confirmed the themes and when asked if there was anything missing or anything they would add to the themes, they both said no. Dave's member check was highlighted with him confirming the themes and saying, "I didn't see anything missing." Matthew found Support and Validation from Faculty and Intentional Self-Disclosure the most indicative components of his experience:

MATTHEW: It's hard to know what's missing, but maybe that's a good sign. Maybe nothing is missing. I don't know. I look at this, and I feel like a lot of this stuff, at least the parts that I experienced like I sort of spoke about. Our relationship with the faculty, which is both positive and sometimes complicated about intentional self-disclosure that really stands out to me. So yeah, I think this is great.

Rose, Olivia, Amy, Gee, and Beth all confirmed the themes and said they agreed with what was listed and did not see anything missing. Rose focused on her reactions to the other participants; however, she said, "But as far as content was concerned, I think that what you pulled out for me it was really good. I thought that you put so much effort into that. I still don't know how you did it." Olivia agreed that her quotes and the themes listed represented her experience, "They all pretty much summarize, or I've experienced at least one during my time in my Master's program. So I think it's a good overview of what a minority person goes through." In reference to the themes, Gee stated, "They seemed to fit perfectly actually because that is what it seems like. Life is made up of

themes or periods of time and experiences. I think it was appropriate.” Amy said, “I think everything was fine, the way you had it mapped out and everything. [...] I agree with it. I think it’s great.” Beth agreed with the quotes that were listed for her and saw areas in which she was not listed, but could relate, “I think that the ones that I would think of were listed and I think that there were other ones that I was like oh yes, I could relate to those.”

Mary explained she related to Speaking as a Member of Minority and the lack of Support and Validation from Faculty. Although she stated she had a positive experience in general, she could still relate to the struggles the other participants felt:

MARY: I think the one that stands out the most for me is the... wanting to speak for myself and that ethnicity. Sometimes a lack of support, and I feel a little bad saying that because I feel that my professors are great and they're very supportive, but the lack of peer support would be it for me, the lack of peer support, the lack of feeling comfortable to speak out loud, share my opinions, and the lack of peer relationships, I think are some of the ones that I feel stand out the most for me.

Finally, Mae summarized what many other participants appeared to be saying. She explained the universality present among the themes. Regardless of how one identifies as a minority, Mae believed the experiences were similar:

MAE: Let's see, I'm trying to find about things [within the themes] that don't fit. It's harder than what I thought it was going to be. I mean, if you're a minority, it seems like your experiences are kind of universal. No matter what minority group you are, it's all about being that person who's been singled out.

During the member check, participants expressed approval of the themes and quotes that were chosen. Some of the stories the participants chose to share during the remainder of the second round of interviews supported the themes and have been included in the following sections. In addition, participants were added to the specific essential themes in which they were not listed in in Chapter Three.

Past trauma/ lived experiences/ minority experiences. Ysera added to their experience in Past Trauma/ Lived Experience/ Minority Experiences by speaking about how they felt their past trauma had an **Effect in Class/Program**. Ysera, who has a diagnosis of PTSD, spoke about the counseling textbook they were assigned for an upcoming class:

YSERA: The book actually said something terrible, "If you have a mental disorder, should you be a counselor?" And it was like, "Probably not." It literally said that and I was like, "Oh, that's a smack in the face because the person that writes the textbook works in my program."

The effect of Ysera's past sexual trauma and subsequent diagnosis was not only apparent in their program, but also in the assigned readings. The fact that Ysera's professor is the author of the textbook adds a deeper component of fear and shame. Not only was Ysera perceiving a message of non-belonging, it was their interpretation that their faculty blatantly perpetuated the idea someone with a DSM diagnosis could not be a competent counselor.

Support and validation. During the second round of interviews, *Support and Validation* was an incredibly potent reoccurring theme. Matthew discussed his meaning making of the essential theme of *Support and Validation*. He explained his trepidation of the actual competence of counselors and counselor educators with multicultural people:

MATTHEW: I think that in that part, the support and validation, that theme to me is more about, I know where I am, but I'm interested to see how these other professionals who will then be my colleagues out in the world, how are they interacting with people who identify as other or queer or minority? Are they ready? Are they really ready? I think if I had a qualm about a validation, it's about sometimes the validation of being multiculturally competent as a counselor.

Lack of and seeking others like self/loneliness. New to the second round was the participants' identification with the feeling of loneliness. Loneliness was added to the

incidental theme of **Lack of and Seeking Others Like Self**. It did not seem as though loneliness was its own theme, rather it belonged within the existent theme of Lack of and Seeking Others Like Self. Olivia and Rose articulated the loneliness they feel within their programs. Olivia explained she did not put the word lonely to her experience until our interview. When probed about if she was lonely as the only out lesbian woman in her program she stated:

OLIVIA: I don't have anyone that I can talk to and say, "Oh, how did you feel when we talked about marriage equality today in class? Was it a little weird for you?" I can't debrief with anyone. So that is kind of lonely, I guess, if I think about it.

Rose initiated dialogue about the loneliness she felt within her program. This was a stark difference from our first interview in which she felt a sense of belonging within her program and university. Rose explained part of the shift in her experience was due to a sense of being overwhelmed as her master's program progressed through the semester. Rose spoke about how rejuvenated and at one with the world she is when she can retreat back to the desert. The contrast between the safe space of the desert with her counseling program is described below:

ROSE: But here in school and in [city] and whatever, I felt so lonely. I don't feel connected to people [...] I feel I am burned out from work and I don't know how to achieve self-care when I am giving my all to school and work and my husband and my mother is sick now and everything I feel like all my energy is just being sucked out of me and I am just a shell, and I don't have the passion and the spark and the fire that I did the last time we talked. I feel limp in a way. But when I recalled the desert its just, I am like, "Wow, it's... I am so lonely."

Amy, Gee, and Mary expanded on their experiences with seeking other people within their programs like themselves. Amy was finding that despite racial and ethnicity differences, she could find people within her program with whom she related. She spoke

about an African American classmate who moved to the area in which their university resides:

AMY: She was 12 when she moved down here and she's like, "When I moved down here everybody made fun of me because they told me I talked like the White girls and so I had to re-learn how to talk and be a part of the culture." So she just thought it was the most interesting thing to know that even though a lot of people in my class are the same race, they're from different cultures. So everybody's just kind of working together and trying to figure it out.

Amy's experience of learning that everyone in her class is working to find commonalities and ways to fit with each other was not representative of Gee or Mary's stories. Gee shared the impact of having no Black professors within his counseling program:

GEE: They don't have any Black professors in the counseling education department. It's one thing to talk about diversity but how is it being applied? Is it being taught in class and to the students and so forth? That's the only thing that is on my mind.

Mary explored her loneliness within the classroom. She spoke about seeing White women and Black women have support within class. Mary wondered if her Latina identity was causing her classmates to keep distant from her:

MARY: I think being the only self-proclaimed Latina in the classroom... sometimes it's mostly women in the program, mostly White women and then mostly Black women. And when there are discussions in class, I see how sometimes because they are in groups, there were larger groups of the same group of people.

Self/ spirituality/ coping skills. Amy spoke about her realization her age might be a contributing factor to her coping within her master's program. She said she was not only a racial minority within her program; she was older than many of her classmates. Amy believed her age helped her remain more grounded and calm while a minority:

AMY: It would have been fun going in right after undergrad, 22, but I'm 10 years older than that now. I think I'm just a lot calmer. I still have a lot of anxiety

about it and I get really nervous but I'm a little more accepting and a lot calmer then I would have been if I was younger in the same situation. I mean, yeah, I think that's just it. I'm just calmer about it. I think I would have been a little more hesitant or a little bit shy, just not as willing maybe, like too intimidated to be able to go through with it. I think age has a lot to do with it.

Faculty, supervisors, internship, program (positive and not). Gee, Matthew, and

Rose chose to share about faculty or staff members that contributed to their feelings of validation and support. Gee talked about a professor who had high standards while also supporting students:

GEE: I had a professor that is really kind of hard, in a good way. He doesn't accept less than his standards. He seems vested in helping me to improve and to learn and to apply what I am learning. That is one of the things that has transpired over this semester.

Matthew spoke about how he and his partner's house had burned down and that part of the aftermath was conversations that involved his partner with the entire University community:

MATTHEW: It was surprising because people were very, very open and it was some of the first times that people asked about him like, "How is he doing? What's his name again?" you know. Like, "Is he okay? Does he need anything? Does he need pants, a coat?" ... So, that was kind of an interesting moment because like it sort of validated the fact that they know who I am and they know that I have a partner and know that I'm gay.

Rose chose to speak about a faculty member who did affirm and support her. Because her experience had evolved from positive to challenging and isolating, the support of this professor was incredibly meaningful to Rose:

ROSE: He sent me an email and he said, "It was such a pleasure having you in class, your paper was exceptional and I look forward to having you in class again if our paths cross again." And I was like, "Wow, that was a huge compliment for me to actually have an instructor take the time to email that and mail that over and say that and send it off to me and go wow that's effort, that's care, that's compassion, that's why I love this profession."

Cohort/ peers (positive and not). Mae commented on Gee's quote listed under *Cohort/Peers*. She related to his experience of being able to create shallow connections with classmates within the program:

MAE: Like for Gee in the cohort and peers, he said, "I can make friends on the surface but not so many people can be a close friend." Yeah, it's like a distance. Kind of like I'm afraid that they're going to betray me or something.

Support and Validation was explored extensively throughout the second round of interviews. Participants shared their experiences of feeling isolated, supported, and lonely. Minority master's students are searching for support and validation within their counseling programs. Finding or continuously searching for support and validation is impactful for all participants of this study.

Congruence/ coming out/ being open. During the second round of interviews, participants expanded on their experiences with Congruence/ Coming Out/ Being Open. Beth commented on the first round themes and quotes under this section. She explained the growth she saw with being authentic to herself and said:

BETH: Congruence, coming out, being open, I think like my experience with that theme in particular is like the more that I have been brave and been open with people, the closer that I have been able to be with them or I have been able to connect better with people.

Choosing to speak or remain silent in class. Mae and Mary expanded on their experiences of *Choosing to Speak or Remain Silent in Class*. Mary spoke about how her previous experience as an "Angry Latina" due to racism in the classroom had directly impacted her experience in her master's program. She explained she chose to remain silent in class unless she had time to construct an answer she felt comfortable sharing:

MARY: Sometimes I don't feel comfortable talking necessarily about White privilege in a mostly White setting. I did go to predominantly White college where I did experience a lot of really racist and prejudice. And I was still very

vocal. I became the angry Latina in college, I think, at a certain point. But it just goes to the point where... I mean, like, I'm in a graduate program. I don't necessarily want to burn the very few bridges there are in a program and have myself being labeled as angry Latina and then not be taken seriously. I'm very careful about when I speak in class and what I speak about. So when I do decide to speak up is because I processed the information and the answer or the opinion that I want to offer it to the class.

Mae had shared her reactions to Mary's first round of quotes. Mae resonated with the lack of support adding to the choice to remain silent in class. Mae's undergraduate university had welcomed diversity of thinking, while her previous master's program did not. She explained she was not open to sharing her atheist beliefs within her new master's program:

MAE: So with Mary, and the choosing to speak or remain silent in class. She was like, "You know you want to speak out, but then you shy away from it because you don't feel support." I guess, for example, in class and stuff like that, if they ever are talking about religion, which in my new program it doesn't happen as much as the last one, but with the last one I was very, very open because I had just come out of a program at [University] which really encouraged being open and transparent about yourself and debate and philosophy and all that. So I was super, super open and I found out that it really was not a good idea to be open through my experience there. So now, I'm not open at all. I don't talk in class. I'm like a completely different person. It really, really changed me.

Intentional self-disclosure. Amy had recently had an experience of intentional self-disclosure with her classmates. She had feared showing her lack of knowledge with the cultural customs of her peers. Amy decided, however, to take a chance and self-disclose her confusion to her peers:

AMY: But I mean sometimes I stick myself out there. We went to have drinks after our last class like everybody got together at a restaurant down the street. So one of the girls that I'm a little bit closer to, she was like, "Oh, I've got my weave in today." And I just started laughing and I was like, "okay." And all the other girls were excited. I looked at her and I was like, "I just don't understand." This is something a little bit like lighthearted but I still don't know anything about it and these are my cohorts. Then, they were explaining some things to me and then one of the other girls that I'm not as close to but she's going to be in my graduating class and everything, she looked at me and she was like, "You know

what? I really appreciate it that you just admitted that and asked how it works. Even though it's something so simple like we think." But she was like, "There's this Caucasian woman I work with and she came up to me, touched my hair and came into my personal space. And instead you just asked and said, "I don't know what you're talking about" instead of like invading my space. So that helps me realize that even though it's different I can just ask. I can just be frank.

Amy's experience validated her choice to self-disclose to her peers. Olivia related an experience she had where she was trying to decide if and how to self-disclose her minority status to a peer in a skills class. An added component was the conversation being taped as per the course expectations. Olivia described her decision making process:

OLIVIA: Going into the room knowing my [classmate] was going to have to counsel me after I was done counseling her, I had a little conversation in my head like, "Do I come out, or do I not come out?" Because it's going to be played in front of the whole class at some point and maybe not the whole session, but [the professor] did say he would take parts and play it so that the class can critique it. So it was like if I tell [my classmate] it's being videotaped. One, it's on videotape forever, and two, my whole class is going to see it. Is that something I want to divulge so soon in the semester?

Awareness of effect of self on class/ others. Chapter Three discussed **Awareness of Effect of Self on Class/ Others** as a subtheme; however, only one participant, Gee, had a quote that directly fit under this category. After the first member check and second round of interviews, this subtheme was not highlighted. Therefore, it was cut as a subtheme.

Fear of rejection. Fear of rejection was validated during the second round of interviews. Amy spoke freely about her fears of rejection within her program. Initially, she commented her fears of rejection were not based on her minority status. Through further reflection, she recognized part of her fear did stem from cultural differences:

AMY: I don't know if we talked about fear of rejection. But I think my fear of rejection would be more of like on an intelligence level as opposed to racial level

but also I may not put myself out there because I don't have the same culture [...] It's all been pretty positive and anything that's been negative it's just because I'm going into it scared. I feel like people are going to judge me. I feel like people are going to be like this and they keep proving me wrong.

Matthew and Mae shared their fear of being rejected based on their minority identity. Matthew sited his lived experience as a gay man in his 30's as part of the reason he is more careful when disclosing his identity:

MATTHEW: I think because I'm a 30 year old gay as opposed to a 20 year old gay, I do have that little bit of initial fear of you never know what's going to happen. And like every time you come out to somebody or every time you mention it, there is this you don't know what's going to happen. There's no guarantees. So, I think even with that like I have a little bit of fear.

Mae had previous lived experiences that affected her choice to be open within her counseling internship site. Her atheist identity could be called into question as she was placed in a counseling site that utilized a Christian-based recovery treatment:

MAE: Right now I'm going into an internship that really bases its whole program on Alcoholics Anonymous so I'm learning more about Alcoholics Anonymous right now. There's that fear again, that I'm not going to be able to do it because it has so much about religion. It kind of requires a belief in a higher power in order to see its effectiveness. I'm just kind of worried that I'm going to get rejected or they're going to find out that I'm an atheist and I don't know. It's like a fear that's really been bugging me, right?

Mary, Mae, Amy, Olivia, and Matthew shared experiences that reflected their individual struggles with Congruence/ Coming Out/ Being Open within their master's programs. Minority identity was a major factor in choosing to be authentic. The fear of rejection and the choice to speak freely about identity or classroom topics was impacted by minority status.

Critical incident/ defining moment. The second round of interviews yielded a few adjustments to the first round's *Critical Incident/ Defining Moment* incidental themes. One participant experienced an affirming experience, four participants

experienced new isolating experiences, and one participant chose to clarify the critical incident that was utilized within round one.

Affirming/ confirming experience. Olivia shared a critical incident that had occurred after the first interview. Olivia was pleasantly surprised when a classmate who identified as straight began to explore advocacy within the LGBTQ communities. Olivia explained her affirming experience with her classmate:

OLIVIA: I did have someone last semester who came up to me and she was like, "For my cultural plunge activity I want to do something with the LGBT community," but she's like, "I don't really know if that's risky enough for me," and then she listed all of these reasons. She's been to gay-straight alliance meetings. She's done a bunch of work at Affirmations, which is in the LGBT resource center in my state. And I was like, "Well, it sounds like you're already doing a lot of great things. Maybe you should pick another culture to experience." So that was really nice that she said, "Oh, I've already done all of these things and I've actually thought about" ... She even said she wanted to go into more research with the LGBT community, but unfortunately the state we live in just doesn't provide that schooling-wise and she wasn't willing to go out of state to get that schooling. So that was really nice to hear that my heterosexual peer counterpart came up to me and said that, but unfortunately that's really been my only experience where someone has come up to me and said, "Oh, I have all these interests in it."

Isolating experience. Amy stated she wanted to clarify the experience she shared during the first round of interviews. She explained when her professor asked the class to guess which song belonged to which student, she did not feel persecuted. Amy stated she did not believe anyone had done anything wrong, however, the experience did effect her:

AMY: Everybody was just staring at me because I was different and just completely uncomfortable. There's nothing wrong with it. I guess it's just how it's interpreted. I don't think anybody was trying to be mean about it at all. But it was still so uncomfortable and I think that's the biggest problem that people have with any type of discrimination is that other people aren't aware of how their actions may be hurtful.

Beth processed her isolation during the second round interview. She said part of her isolation was due to her own fear of being vulnerable with her peers. Beth wished for a reciprocal relationship with her classmates:

BETH: If I feel isolated and different from people it's because I don't know anything about other people and I'm not willing to take a risk and share with other people. And I get why that's hard for people to do but like that's, if we are having a hard time connecting with people or relating to people lots of times it's because we are not willing to share and be open.

Mary shared an experience she viewed as more indicative of a critical incident within her master's program. Similar to Amy, Mary attests her experience was not "a big deal." However, she expressed hurt and isolation from her peers:

MARY: The professor handed out these papers, it was a sentence. You can't tell by looking at me but... and we filled it out. And I wrote something. You won't know by looking at me but I grow up in a very small rural community in Mexico, where immigration was one of largest wars of economic... the largest economic fields, and we're like, "Oh, well, who might it be?" And one of my classmates like, "Whoa, well, it's Mary. You would have the accent for it." And looking back, and that is not a big deal, it's not even an issue but I guess I was taken aback a little bit just because in my college experience I was literally discriminated against by some of my college professors with comments like, "Hispanics look alike. You can't speak Spanish in my class. Are you illegal?" Just very blatant comments in front of the classrooms, in front of large groups of people that kind of made me a little bit sensitive.

As discussed earlier, Rose's experience had changed drastically since the first interview. At first, Rose felt her Christian peers and faculty members accepted her Buddhist beliefs and authentic self. During our second round interview, she described a defining isolating experience she had with one of her professors. Rose believed her professor did not respect the students within her class:

ROSE: I had to be very careful about what I said and I felt like I was always on egg shells, and we grew up in a very different background and it was one of those things where he... I feel like there was a power clash and a power differential that he made clear every single minute of the class. I felt like he would come in and he would make fun of his clients [...] I thought that, that was unprofessional. I

thought that, that said a lot about him, a lot about his insecurities. And eventually, it just chipped away at me. It's like every day, was just like this negativity that came in, and he would jokingly say, "Well, if you don't do this, I'll give you an F." But it had nothing to do with the course work.

Rose explained that as the semester went on, her grades in this class got progressively worse, even though she was meeting the expectations set forth by the rubric. Rose did not know if this incident was directly due to her Buddhist belief system, however she did question why this was happening to her and wondered if it had to do with her minority status. Her final grade at the end of the semester was lower than she had expected. When she spoke with the faculty member about his grading and how she had met the expectations of the rubric:

ROSE: He wasn't like, "Yeah, I can see that and, well, if you could discuss it with me maybe we can change that." He is like, "Well, I feel I gave you all the comments that I feel necessary to give you. I made those decisions for a reason so I am going to stick to them." I started weeping and crying and I left and I was crying, and I was crying for a day, [...] And I showed what was inside of myself to someone that I don't respect. I mean I respected him when he was my teacher because he was my teacher, he had knowledge that I didn't have, but after reflection, it was not... I don't respect him for what he did and how he treated people and how he treated me. So, that experience with him totally influenced my view of teachers now.

Mae's critical incident seemed to change from our first conversation. She shared an assignment from her first master's program that really reflected a sense of isolation and persecution. The assignment was to prepare a speech to an ethics board based on an assigned ethical violation. While Mae's classmates had ethical violations such as "Oh, they received a gift from a client and they accepted it," or, "Oh, they had a sexual relationship with a client," hers was "that I was demeaning about someone else's religion and that the client felt that I disregarded her religion and tried to confront her and tried to impose my own beliefs." Mae had to stand before three faculty members and make her

case. She stated, “I broke down, I just cried because it was just so intimidating. That was a really horrific experience for me, it was very traumatic. I wish it hadn't happened. I definitely think it was the main reason I decided to transfer.”

As the participants reflected on their experiences and our dialogue during the first round of interviews, they had clarifications and more accurate examples of *Critical Incident/ Defining Moments*. While Olivia had an affirming experience, Amy wanted to clarify the meaning of her first round experience, and Beth, Mary, Rose, and Mae had isolating experiences within their counseling master's programs. It appears the moments that solidify the ‘otherness’ of the minority students are most potent for the participants.

Quitting/ questioning. The second round interviews solidified *Quitting/Questioning* as an incidental theme. Although some of the participants experienced a sense of questioning whether they could complete their programs or choosing to quit, many did not believe the self-doubt was due to minority identity. Olivia and Mary did not speak toward *Quitting/Questioning* in either interview. Amy stated, “It's not having to do with the minority reasons but just inner-self stuff.” When Matthew was asked if he had considered quitting, he said, “No, not so much. I think that just my experience with other students in the counseling program just cement the idea that counselor means a lot of different things to a lot of different people.” Matthew did not question his choice to become a counselor and recognized people in his program are striving toward their own identification of the word counselor. Beth explained her questioning was not due to feeling different than others in her program, but her own trust in her ability to accomplish a master's degree:

BETH: I think that it's maybe a bit more for me like not feeling like I don't fit in the program but more like, "Can I do this?" ... Like, "Am I capable?" I want to be

capable and sometimes felt like I fall short a little bit... or capable of like being able to handle it, or like in the classroom like, it's like, even just stupid things like writing a paper and like feeling like not being able to communicate or not being able to write or not being able to get the assignment done the way that I want and feeling like there is definitely been times where I'm like, catastrophize like, I can't get this assignment done or this project is hard for me, I don't know if I'm going to make it, or I don't know if I can get through it.

Although many participants either did not relate to *Quitting/Questioning* or believed it was not due to their minority status, between the first and second round, Rose had an experience of questioning her choice in pursuing a counseling degree. She stated it was a fleeting moment, but the interaction she had with her professor was enough for her to wonder if she should quit:

ROSE: When I told Josh, my husband I said, "What's the point, I felt like I just want to crawl into a corner and just hide for a while." I don't know, I just feel... yeah, I mean, I can just drop out, I mean, what's an A-. But then I got over that pretty quick. I mean, I didn't stay with that feeling for very long, that was more of an old Rose sort of reaction to things that resurfaced and I quickly buried it again and I am like, "No, come on, don't be stupid. You're still capable. You still go to class, you're still healthy, you could still knock the socks off a Power point."

Quitting/Questioning was a component of the experiences of the participants in this study. However, many participants believed minority status was not the propellant toward questioning or quitting. Olivia, Mary, Amy, Beth, and Matthew either did not contribute their questioning or quitting to their minority statuses, or they did not experience self-doubt at all. The other half of the participants did relate their minority identities to their experiences of questioning or quitting. Therefore, *Quitting/Questioning* is a theme, however, it is an incidental versus an essential theme.

Responsibility. At the end of the first round of interviews, Mae was missing from the theme of *Responsibility*. However, in the second round of interviews, Mae contributed an experience that was categorized in *Responsibility to Self*. Other

participants expanded on their sense of *Responsibility*, particularly in Speaking as a Member of a Minority.

To authenticity of self. Mae spoke about her resolve to push through her struggles and find a counseling program that fit her needs. Mae's sense of responsibility was to her own perseverance:

MAE: There's some days that I'm just like so like, "Wow, you actually got through it and you actually continued." Where most people probably might not have gone on to try to find a different master's program. Because it was so stressful and so hard, but I just felt like this is something I had to do. This is something I wanted to do all my life so I went for it.

This subtheme was edited slightly to include authenticity. Mary's quote exemplifies the responsibility many of the participants felt toward remaining authentic regardless of perceived slights. Mary spoke about how she was constantly wondering if she was not fitting in with her peers due to her own personhood or the inherent differences in culture:

MARY: I think it's mostly internalizing it and wondering if it's me personally and not so much the ethnicity, but occasionally it has popped in my mind but quickly disappears. So it is more heavily... it's come to the point where I internalized it and I think more about it when you asked me. So, yeah, I think that probably is more of separate category [...] That makes me wonder sometimes if it's me or is it also even my ethnicity. That one starts coming in a little bit more. It's just people don't like this specific Latina, like this specific Latina character, because I'm not that stereotypical, "Hey, papi," that kind of Latina, kind of like Sofia Vergara character.

Mary was determined to remain true to herself regardless of the lack of peer connections.

To educating majority. Ysera chose to speak further about their experiences with responsibility to *Educating the Majority*. They explained the sports team at their university was believed by many people to be a racist symbol. However, when they

stated that as a reason not to attend a sporting event with classmates, their classmates did not understand. Ysera then began to wonder if the responsibility they had to helping others see oppression was ever going to be welcomed by their peers:

YSERA: I'm trying to come from this perspective of maybe they don't have access to everything that I read or maybe they're not involved with people that really question them or maybe they don't have the same opportunities and maybe to them it really is okay. They don't really think about their words. But for me it's hard because I'm like, "You need to take responsibility for what you're saying."

As evidenced in the first round of interviews, this theme is present, especially for Ysera. However, other participants spoke about the idea of educating the majority as a means to advocating for the minority. Therefore, I have decided to merge these themes together to create **To Educating Majority/To Advocacy of the Minority**.

Of speaking as a member of the minority. Beth, Matthew, Mary, and Olivia further explored the sense of responsibility when speaking as a member of a minority. Without having the support of similar people, the participants felt a weight when speaking as a minority. Beth explained how her experience was hers alone, "I just liked maybe what they said in terms of sharing like this is my personal experience as being a part of this minority, but that doesn't mean you can say that everybody that falls into that category has the same thoughts on it." Matthew spoke about the comfort he felt when reading the first round themes and quotes and realizing others had experiences that were similar to his, "That was sort comforting to know other people who feel like they're the other and the room is debating like, 'When do I say anything at all?' and two, 'How do I even say it so I don't sound like the voice on the mountain?' Sometimes, I wonder, 'Do other student have this issue.'" Mary recognized she did not share in class because she did not want to be seen as a representative for all Latina people:

MARY: I think some of my opinions, perspectives are valuable but I don't always feel comfortable talking in the classroom because, one, I don't want to represent the whole group of people and have people be where like, "Well, she's a Latina. She should know and we should take her word for it." I want them to take my word for it because it's me but not because I'm representing a group of people.

Olivia also spoke about the familiarity she saw in this topic in the first round themes. She shared the responsibility present when speaking as a member of a minority was present in every class:

OLIVIA: ...The one where you don't want to speak up because you don't want to be the voice for your specific minority group. That was like, "Oh my God," that's like every time I'm in class and my minority group is brought up, I don't want to say something. Or even if the minority group is not brought up, but I say something, like I'm representing everyone else. So that was the most important one to me because I think that's something that's always on my mind when I'm in class whether it's conscious or unconscious.

To others. Amy processed through her responsibility to help oppressed peoples. She saw inherent value in being a White person at a predominately Black university. She wondered if people who had not had experiences with different cultures could prove to be multiculturally competent counselors:

AMY: I feel like a lot of people that are getting their degree are going to like mainly all the White colleges. I mean, I don't know, if you don't have experience with working with different demographics in any way I think it will be a hard time. So having a relationship with minorities status or a responsibility to others and things like that.

The responsibility minority students feel to themselves, others, and not representing anyone other than themselves was explored more thoroughly in the second round of interviews. Authenticity was added to *Responsibility to Self* as to clarify the struggle minority students might face to conform or retreat. In addition, participants seemed to find solace in other minority students struggling to speak without generalized representation.

Relationship with minority status. Relationship with Minority Status was another section that was discussed during the second round of interviews. Matthew, Amy, and Mary shared their further understandings of their relationships with their minority statuses. *Length of Time* and *Past Minority Experience* were expanded.

Length of time. Matthew related his “coming out journey” as a coping mechanism to his ability to be out within his master’s program. He wondered what it would have been like for him to be in the process of coming out as he entered his counseling program. He believed the fact he was openly gay and that he was open when entering his program added to his success:

MATTHEW: At least when I look at these, I think of one of the benefit that I was open when I started my program, so that is a little bit different. I would be interested in somebody who went through a coming out journey while they were in counseling education, which I'm sure would happen because it gets introspective and it gets deep sometimes. I could see that happening, and I think that that would be wild. That would be a journey. I think that having been out for so long was... That sort of solidified my identity, and so that was to my benefit. It was one thing that comes to mind.

Past minority experience. Amy reiterated she had not experienced situations where she was the minority. Her past minority experience was non-existent. She pondered if her positive experience in her program was in part due to her minority identity being numerical as opposed to oppressed:

AMY: Having a minority experience can be a positive thing. Well, I feel like it is for me. But do I feel that way because I'm a White female? I also grew up in my hometown with a bunch of different races. So it's the first time that I've ever been the only one.

Mary, on the other hand, related her past incidents of oppression to her current experiences within her counseling program. She believed she was better able to cope

with oppression. She also wondered if she was more attune to subtle microaggressions than she might have been had she not been oppressed previously:

MARY: I think similar type experiences definitely prepared me to kind of brush off any future situations, comments, mindsets, but at the same time it also makes me a little bit more alert to it. It makes me think a little bit more about it and I think having been in there and how much in these communities throughout my life, kind of add it to... kind of acts to my... to me, kind of analyzing the situation a little bit more based on the diversity, prejudice. It is not something that I have in mind all day, every day, but it's something that it often comes... it often presents itself more.

Cultural norms. *Cultural Norms* was not as discussed during the second round of interviews. Though, Mae discussed her experience with cultural norms for the first time and Rose expanded on her perception of *Value Conflict/ Sense of Self as Counselor* cultural norms.

Counseling norms vs. cultural norms. Mae spoke about the balance she must adhere to as a counselor and as her authentic self. She explained her norms outside of the classroom were different than the norms she ascribed to herself as a counselor:

MAE: There's a different person that I am with my friends and then there's a different person that I am when I'm in the counseling session. There are definitely things that I feel like are... like I enjoy talking about with my friends and debating about with my friends but I understand that it's totally inappropriate as a counselor to do that.

Value conflict/ sense of self as counselor. Rose discussed a recent experience in which her class was assigned a reading about Adam and Eve. She spoke about not understanding the reading and having to ask her husband, who was raised Christian, about the meaning of betrayal in the Bible. She stated, “and then I got all weird about it. And I am like, ‘I shouldn't have to read about Adam and Eve.’ And I got really defensive, which I haven't done in the last year.” Rose processed her reaction to the assignment and her professor asking the class to read the Bible for an example of primal trust and sin:

ROSE: I certainly can appreciate where he was coming from, but for me, it was more of a... I don't see how I can apply this but then I got past it and, I was like, "All right, I only have to read this once" and even... but I am thinking about it. That's the thing. If I didn't care about it, in some capacity, I wouldn't be talking about it with you. I wouldn't have written about it. I wouldn't have then milling over it. So there's something about it that maybe pokes at my truth or my experience or... and then the funny thing is, I never had... I mean truly traumatic negative experiences with anybody that was Christian or Catholic or whatever.

The participants viewed Cultural Norms as an essential component of their experience, though most did not expand on it. Mae was added to Cultural Norms for the first time. Rose expanded on her own experience with the Cultural Norms existent within her program.

Expectations. Olivia, Beth, and Mae expanded on their experiences of **Expectations** of *Counselors/Faculty* and *Peers/Counselors in Training*. Dave did not discuss *Expectations* in the first or second round interviews and was asked if this theme fits for him during the next member check. After completing the second round of interviews, it became apparent Program, a broader expectation group, was missing from the Counselors/ Faculty subtheme. Therefore, the subtheme became *Counselors/ Faculty/ Program*.

Counselors/ faculty/program. Olivia addressed her expectations for her counseling program. She believed there was a greater need for LGBTQ-focused counselors due to the oppression experienced by those communities. Olivia had hoped her counseling program would help meet that need:

OLIVIA: I guess maybe the only thing I could think of is because we are going into counseling, there is a huge demand for minorities to be counselors, and I don't know if maybe why don't more people go into it, I guess? Like I told you before, I thought I wouldn't be the only gay person in my class, which was shocking. I don't know why I thought that but then I got there and I'm like, "Oh, I really am the only gay person," even though that's been my experience pretty

much throughout my whole undergrad. I'm not sure why I thought it would change, but the fact that I see a demand for LGBT counselors in my community specifically and I don't really see them going into schooling for it. So that's just a letdown I guess, a little bit.

Peers/ counselors in training. Beth and Mae discussed their expectations of Peers/ Counselors in Training. Beth explained her experience in the counseling classroom as opposite to how counselors are expected to act with clients. She saw her peers as judgmental instead of exhibiting unconditional positive regard:

BETH: As counselors we're supposed to be non-judgmental and unconditional positive regard but when you are in a classroom where so many people are judgmental of each other and there is not unconditional positive regard.

Mae related to Mary's experience after the first round of interviews. Mae was able to think back to her first master's program and process the expectations she had for her peers. Mae believed her peers should have exhibited empathy:

MAE: I really liked what Mary said, "We're in a counseling program and people are supposed to be empathetic and kind. Reach out more and listen." When I was in my previous program, I felt like, it was just a bunch of girls together in a room all the time and we were psychoanalyzing each other. Instead of being empathetic and listening and trying to understand and using those counselor skills, everyone was trying to psychoanalyze and see where people's faults were in that program.

All the participants spoke about the Expectations they held for their peers, programs, and counselors expect Dave. Master's students expect people within the field of counseling to act differently than they might assume others behave. During the next member check, I asked Dave about his experience with Expectations.

Thematic changes. As discussed in the Second Round and Member Check section, there were some slight changes to the themes presented in Chapter Three. Most notably, *Quitting/ Questioning* became an incidental theme instead of an essential theme. This was due to many participants experiencing the theme, but acknowledging their

minority statuses did not cause the *Quitting/ Questioning*. *Awareness of effect of Self on Class/ Others* was cut from the **Congruence/Coming Out/Being Open** essential theme. In addition, *Loneliness* was added to *Lack of and Seeking Others Like Self*, which is a subtheme of **Support and Validation**. *Authenticity* was added to *Responsibility to Self*. Two subthemes were merged into one: *To Educating Majority/To Advocacy of the Minority*. Finally, *Program* was added to **Expectations** of *Counselors/ Faculty*. The changes to the first round of themes were due to expanded understanding of the lived experiences of the participants. Figure 4 synthesizes the changes that were made to the previous themes and delivers a more accurate portrayal of the experiences of self identifies minority students in counseling master's programs.

Round Two Themes

Past Trauma/ Lived Experiences/ Minority Experiences	Support and Validation	Congruence / Coming Out/ Being Open	Critical Incident/ Defining Moment	Responsibility	Relationship with Minority Status	Cultural Norms	Expectations
Effect in Class/Program	Lack of and Seeking others Like Self/ Loneliness	Choosing to Speak or Remain Silent in Class	Affirming/ Confirming Experience	To Authenticity of Self	Length of Time	Counseling Micro Aggressions	Counselors/ Faculty/ Program
Personal Counseling/ Experience with a Counselor	Self/ Spirituality/ Coping Skills	Intentional Self Disclosure	Isolating Experience	To Educating Majority	Past Minority Experience	Counseling Norms vs. Cultural Norms	Peers/ Counselors in Training
Reason for Becoming a Counselor in Training	Faculty, Supervisors, Internship, Program (positive and not)	Awareness of Effect of Self on Class/ Others	Relational Experience	To advocacy of Minority	Level of Comfort with Minority Group	Value Conflict/ Sense of Self as Counselor	
	Cohort/ Peers (positive and not)	Fear of Rejection		Of Speaking as a Member of the Minority	Level of Comfort with Majority Group	Sharing the Minority Experience	
				To Others			
Quitting/ Questioning							

Figure 4. Second Round Essential, Incidental, and Sub- Themes

Conclusion

The second round of interviews coincided with the first member check. The participants determined the amount of information they would like to share based on the progression of their semester and meaning making that occurred after the first round of interviews. All of the participants agreed with the themes that were presented to them. However, after analysis of the second round of interviews, it became clear that some slight editing needed to occur for the themes to more accurately depict the participants' experiences. The essential and incidental themes are: Past Trauma/Lived Experience/Minority Experiences, Support and Validation, Congruence/ Coming Out/ Being Open, Responsibility, Relationship with Minority Status, Cultural Norms, Expectations, and Quitting/ Questioning. The next step in this research was to email the participants the new theme table and schedule a final interview. This interview was structured as a member check, with the participants choosing whether or not they had more to share about their lived-experiences.

Chapter V

Third Round and Final Member Check

Introduction

Similar to the Second Round and Member Check, the third round and final member check coincided with each other. Most participants chose to use the interview as a final member check to relate their reactions and perceptions of the Second Round Themes. However, Rose, Mary, Mae, Gee, and Dave also expanded on their new experiences as a minority student and continued onto a third round of interviews. The third round and final member check occurred toward the midterm of spring semester in 2015. Chapter Five will highlight participants' responses to the Second Round Themes, offer additional experiences shared within the Third Round, explain the finalized themes, and explore the implications of this study.

Member Check and Impact of Second Round Themes

The participants' reactions to the Second Round Themes were unanimously positive. I have included direct quotes that speak to some of the participants' reactions to the edited version of the themes. The final member check affirmed the themes and provided the rationale for ending the research process. Matthew agreed with not needing to edit the themes further. He stated, "I think it's good where it is right now." Beth processed though her reactions to the themes stating, "Yeah I thought they all fit, I hope they all were good. I thought there was a lot that you came up with that I wouldn't have thought about, but they're accurate." Similarly, Mary said, "I think they work pretty well. Especially for me, I feel like those topics I can relate to. So, I'm pretty much fine with it." Rose and Amy expanded on their thoughts about the second round themes:

ROSE: It sounds to me like everything is a little more inclusive, I think, a little more well-rounded. So I like that. I mean, not that anything was missing before but I definitely feel like now that they're there, it's like "Oh yeah, okay. Yeah." It seems like that would need to be included in the final draft for sure. So I think that the changes are really good. It's a good thing. I would definitely keep them in there. I think that it's an important thing to have in the project, so I approve. Thumbs up.

AMY: I like that after reading the themes and then underneath each theme, even though I don't consider myself a minority in the entire society, definitely a minority in my situation. This speaks to, I think, minorities in general and not just specifically what a minority is defined as. So it encompasses me as well even though I don't consider myself a minority in my society but just in my place.

The participants confirmed the second round themes and supported ending the research process. They also stated they had exhausted sharing their experience as minority students. The following sections are further support for the third and final version of the essential, incidental, and subthemes within this study. I have included only sections that were directly discussed by participants.

Essential to incidental: Quitting/questioning. While all participants agreed with the reclassification of Quitting/Questioning, Beth and Ysera chose to explicitly speak about their thoughts. Ysera was surprised to see the reclassification of the theme, "But I thought they were appropriate. And I thought it was interesting to see that that became, the quitting and questioning kind of became like, smaller." I explained the need to reclassify due to many participants believing Quitting/Questioning was due to internal struggles instead of minority status. In reference to the intention of the reclassification Beth stated, "I would agree with the statement that you made, that maybe was more of a personal thing, I never really have thought about quitting or questioned the program based on [my minority identity], so that I think is accurate."

Addition of loneliness. Based on the third round of interviews and final member check, the addition of *Loneliness* to *Lack of and Seeking Other like Self* in **Support and Validation** seemed to be the most impactful for the participants. Beth, Matthew, Ysera, Mary, and Gee spoke about their personal connections with Loneliness while in their master's programs. In reference to loneliness, Ysera stated, "That's a good addition because that's actually something I feel most of the time. It's like a large part for me." Beth explained loneliness might be the most potent theme for her time as a minority student:

BETH: I think loneliness might be key to my maybe overall experience sometimes. I don't think I feel that all the time, but I think especially probably initially and with amongst, like there are certain people that I feel like I can be my true authentic self with and be accepted and with those people I don't feel lonely, but that's taken a long time to get to that point of where you're willing to open up and be yourself, and be able to express your thoughts, feelings, who you are and then be accepted. And it's not a very big group, even with a lot of the experiences we have with a lot of people. I think prior to that I've felt a lot of loneliness and felt like I can't really be who I really want to fully. I think I can be myself to an extent, but I think to show my real self to people is a little bit harder.

Matthew explained he was not lonely within his program, but he thought that was due to his relationship with his partner rather than the counseling program itself.

Matthew believed that his minority identity might have added to a sense of loneliness:

MATTHEW: My only thought about loneliness is that if I didn't have my partner I would feel very lonely because I guess, [state] is not where I would want to be forever. And I recognize that for a lot of reasons. Among them is that I am gay. So again, I'm glad that I have a support system in my own household for that. Otherwise, it would be a lonely existence. Especially when you feel bogged down by school and whatnot. You're like, "Why am I even doing this? This is hard."

Mary spoke about what the loneliness was like for her within her counseling program. She explored her loneliness and pondered if her lack of connection with her peers was due to her minority identity:

MARY: Yeah, I do agree that part of it is a little bit of feeling lonely. It's a different kind of lonely where you are in a room full of people that you see on a weekly basis, even a couple few times a week, but somehow you're sitting next to 25 other individuals but you feel that loneliness of not being able to reach out to them or them not responding to you reaching out to them.

Gee used the same language as Mary when describing how he felt lonely within his program. He shared as one of the few or only African Americans in class, he was struggling to find someone with whom he could share his experience:

GEE: Because I could sit in a room full of people feel that way, because you know the majority of my classes, I'm the only African American. And even with, you know I had a class last semester and there was two, it was one female Black, African American and two male African Americans, but we weren't connected. You know, it was just like they had their own thing going on kind of like to me, that's kind of like environmental. That's what I'm used to, you know and you know I just think that that's spot on.

Olivia shared she did not recognize the feeling of loneliness until our second round interview. During the final member check she explained her loneliness was in part due to her minority identity:

OLIVIA: I like the loneliness thing. That is something we talked about in our last interview. And it actually never really dawned on me that I was lonely until we talked, and I was like, "Oh, it is lonely." So I think that's good that you added that because even though it's something maybe you don't think about, you do feel it. And it's until you start to think about it that you realize how lonely you are as a minority person. So I do like that. And I've noticed that maybe more this semester just because I am getting into advanced classes now and I am the only, this semester, I think I'm the only gay person. Someone did come out to me, but privately, so he's not out openly. And so, in all of my classes, I'm the only out gay person.

Addition of authenticity. *Authenticity of Self* was added to the essential theme of **Responsibility**. All of the participants agreed with this change, however, Matthew and Olivia were the only participants who chose to speak directly about it. Matthew explained the inner monologue that would occur when he was in class and wondering if he was remaining authentic to his true self:

MATTHEW: I like that you added the authenticity to self, because I think every time you question whether or not to speak up in class and have that representation moment, it is that question of how authentic do I need to be in that moment? And really what does that mean? Am I being more authentic by stepping back because that's who I am? I'm an introvert in that moment. That's not really me, I'm more extroverted. But I think that there is that negotiation, how valuable is it to be authentic and what would the authentic look like?

Olivia explained her relationship with being authentic to herself in terms of the clothes she chooses to wear. She had recently had a conversation with her friend about what she would wear to a counseling internship interview. Olivia identifies as an androgynous woman and feels more comfortable wearing suits and menswear; however, she did not know if people would receive her clothing choices in an accepting manner:

OLIVIA: And then trying to be authentic and true to yourself, that's definitely, I'm glad that you put that in there because you have to be true to who you are to be happy, to be truly happy. But also you have to still fit this role as a counselor, and what people expect to see as a counselor, and stuff like that. I was talking to my friend recently about like, "What should I wear 'cause I wear masculine clothing?" I'm like, "Do you think wearing a suit to like a counseling job interview is like over the top?" But where do you find business clothes for an androgynous woman? So we literally just had a conversation last week about this like, "What should I wear when I go in for like a job interview?" and stuff like that. And she was like, "I think, you know the counseling field is open enough where they wouldn't judge you." But it is something that still I have to think about that other women in my field don't have to think about. But yet, I wouldn't want to wear something that wasn't what I'm comfortable with or who isn't who I am because that's not being true to myself. And it's also lying like I show up in a dress on the job interview. And then I get the job, and I wear suits the rest of the time. Yeah, so that was something we just talked about.

Expectations. Dave was the only participant who had not expressed his relation to the essential theme of Expectations. During the final member check, I asked him if and how he related to this theme. He explained he had expectations of *Counselors/Faculty/Program* before he enrolled in his master's program. He found his **Expectations** of the faculty to be facilitative of a positive learning environment for him were met. He was surprised; however, his expectations for the physical program and its

accommodations were not entirely met. Dave's advisor had told him that they would accommodate him in any way possible. Dave believed the faculty upheld that promise and his expectations. The building itself proved more difficult than Dave had expected; however, he believed his **Expectations** were met within his master's program:

DAVE: He made me feel as if I would have all the support in the world, and that's been true despite some of the facilities. We laugh about it. I clank around that building. This building [...] was built in the 1960s right in the middle of the student riots. The hallways are built so that only two people shoulder to shoulder can walk, and they could close off certain areas with gates, and there were central areas where people could congregate, and they could funnel riots. You can about imagine what it's like, this six-five guy in a power wheelchair trying to get in and out of observation rooms and get into offices and stuff using a sip and puff straw has been interesting. But I brought that up. I said, "What can be done here? What's been done to accommodate here?" [...] Other people that their injury is one inch lower, they have the need for accessible restrooms. They didn't even have accessible restrooms on the third floor up until last year. They didn't even have accessible restrooms in the entire building until the year before that, which I found really surprising. As far as classroom accommodations and the curriculum and the academic experience, they've been awesome, really, really good. Was I worried about it? Learning what resources were there and how to use them. I had no idea working with SDS services for the school part of it how the class attendant type stuff is going to go, didn't know. It ended up being a lot simpler than I thought. You take into consideration, like I said, adaptability. Yeah, but I had no sense that I was not going to be accommodated.

Each participant shared their insights into the changes that were made in the second round of themes. It was deemed unnecessary to change the themes. One participant, Dave, was able to confirm a theme as essential. Although Dave's expectations were met and many of the other participants felt their expectations were not, I believe it is important to note minority students have specific **Expectations** of *Counselors/Faculty/Program* and *Peers/Counselors in Training*. The participants gave me their permission to finalize the themes to create the Final Themes.

Third Round

A few of the participants chose to share more information about their experiences as minority students within counseling master's programs. These portions of the interview did not relate to the member check and therefore became the third and final round of interviews. There were no new themes discussed. Instead, the participants shared stories that further solidified the existent themes.

ROSE: But my qualitative research class instructor, she was using a lot of God-based readings for this to express phenomenology. I felt like that was very one-sided and I would have appreciated more accounts of maybe people that did not, maybe from an atheist point of view, like what would this be? What would this look like? What would grief look like for an atheist when you're not looking toward God [...] But instead, everything goes back to God, like all of the phenomenon go back to God. Our human experience is God-based because we were created in his image. A lot of that was really hard for me to swallow. We were doing a unit on Eros and love in one class. She said direct quote "Orgasming is like fucking God." Direct quote, I swear. So then I was like, "Well, what if people are offended by that? Maybe some people are very Christian or very Catholic and they see that as a blasphemous thing to say," which I could certainly see. Then I said, "Well, it's interesting that you bring that up, because in the Buddhist tradition, there are three times that you feel "closest to God," and that's during death, enlightenment, and orgasm. She turns to me and said, "You know, Rose, I'm not gonna go down the Buddhist road with you right now. That's if you wanna take my spirituality class, it's available." I thought that I was really shut down by that, and that was the most powerful moment of that for me.

Rose's response to this incident was to choose to remain silent in class, "I shut down actually. I stopped participating as much. Participation is such a huge grade for us and I did get 100% on participation. How? I don't know. But in some way, it was just if my voice is not allowed to be heard, then I might as well not speak at all.

MARY: First, I've noticed a couple very, very, very, very subtle changes with my classmates, maybe two in particular that say hi now every time I come into the classroom, which I found odd, but I think it's because I helped her. I told her that one of the books for the class that's pretty expensive is online for free in the library. I think she appreciated that, so now she's like hi every time I walk in. I'm like me? That one subtle change. I did a presentation and people said oh, good

job Mary, and I'm like thank you. So, it's been a few instances like that. I'm like hmm, I'm not sure how to handle this. It's been nice. I'm still pretty much like that wallflower.

Mae shared the progress she had made since our last interview. Her internship site and new program had been pivotal opportunities for **Support and Validation** and *Faculty, Supervisors, Internship, Program*. Mae had been nervous about starting her internship at a counseling site that focused on using a religious-based model for addiction recovery. As an atheist, Mae was unsure if her beliefs would be accepted within her counseling internship. However, Mae found her ability to relate to clients who were religious and clients who struggled with progressing in the program due to their own atheist beliefs reinforced her decision to become a counselor:

MAE: I feel that my previous program really broke me and made me question my ability as a counselor because of my minority status. My experiences in this new program, however, and through my internship have validated, and reaffirmed, and created more confidence in my abilities to succeed as a counselor. So, I feel that connecting with other minority members through internship, through counseling classes, through anything really does help you get through some of the problems that you're experiencing on your own. And, just, really makes you proud of who you are. I just thought I was never going to be good as a counselor. I really believed that. I really thought that it was going to be bad and that my beliefs were going to hold me back. My minority status was going to hold me back in this field. But I've learned that it can actually help me. And it's been great. Yeah, this internship has really changed everything I believed. It's really helped me.

Gee also expanded on his experience with the theme of **Support and Validation** and subtheme of *Lack of and Seeking Others Like Self/Loneliness*. Unlike Mae, his experience had further isolated him from his faculty and peers. Gee shared his fear of losing his **Authenticity** by conforming to the **Expectations** of the program and faculty:

GEE: But the other thing that I thought was really crucial was the support and validation. Because seeking others like self because that was something I think I talked about before is that I don't have an African American role model to go to and say, "Hey I'm struggling with..." you know baggage. I don't have a professor I can go to that I feel would understand. [...] One of the things that happened

semester was, you know, I was getting critiqued on a paper I was writing. And what I noticed is I write, I still write kind of like how I talk, I say is instead of are. And I just felt like they weren't understanding that that's kind of like part of the thing even though I know, it's their responsibility to teach me proper English and educate me and stuff. But it's like you know how can I, and so I have to focus myself on breaking out of that. And you know, and part of it is it ties into the authenticity. It's like part of me is afraid that I'll start talking differently. And become a different person because I need to speak properly, you know, which is just kind of silly but it's fear based.

Dave relayed an experience he had that highlighted his experience of being a person in a wheelchair within his master's program. He stressed that his classmates did not mean any malice in the following story, but they were uneducated about his abilities. This story was Dave's first experience of not feeling **Supported or Validated** by his *Cohort/Peers*.

DAVE: It's not necessarily negative, but it was something that was a little, not irritating, but it was just kind of a letdown. It was basically over spring break. A lot of the classmates had been able to get down to the ACA conference in Florida. I think I could've made that happen had I known ahead of time that many of them were going. There would've been a lot of hoops to jump through, and I'm still on the whether it would've been possible or not. That was one thing. They almost kept me out of the loop on it and almost assumed that that would've been the case, that I wouldn't have been able to make it. I guess most of my experience was positive up to that point, and then it gave me a letdown. It was like, "Oh shit." I think it's more they didn't know what limitations specifically that I had. If they were more educated in that realm, they would've known that, hey, this is doable. There was a handful, some of the students I probably hung out with more, not that there's too many cliques evolving. I know of one. He kind of knew that there was a possibility for sure, and I think the outcome of this thing is next year I'm definitely going to Montreal to the next one. But I had no clue anybody was going. It was my first let down as far as my disability experience in my program. It didn't bother me too much. It was just sort of a missed opportunity, that drive to keep up and prove myself like the rest of them. Not that it's probably going to play into overall competence. If I were shooting for a job in the end, competing with others, that that's going to be a definitive factor or anything like that on the competitiveness scale. Yeah, no, that was kinda my first experience with it. I know that none of it was necessarily intentional. It was nothing to be mad about. Just something that happened.

Rose, Mary, Mae, Gee, and Dave chose to utilize our interview to expand on their experiences as minority students within counseling master's programs. Although they did not share information that resulted in the need to create more themes, their stories worked to confirm the themes that were already present. Rose and Gee became further isolated from their program while Mary and Mae had experiences that created validation and Dave experienced lack of **Support and Validation** for the first time. All participants have confirmed the themes listed in Figure 5.

Final Themes

The second and third round of interviews and member checks served to confirm and refine the themes that emerged in the first round of interviews. There were no changes from the Second Round Themes to the Final Themes. The Final Themes Table is listed below (Figure 5). Within the next sections, I will re-establish and finalize the meaning of each theme and subtheme.

Final Themes

Past Trauma/ Lived Experiences/ Minority Experiences	Support and Validation	Congruence / Coming Out/ Being Open	Critical Incident/ Defining Moment	Responsibility	Relationship with Minority Status	Cultural Norms	Expectations
Effect in Class/Program	Lack of and Seeking others Like Self/ Loneliness	Choosing to Speak or Remain Silent in Class	Affirming/ Confirming Experience	To Authenticity of Self	Length of Time	Counseling Micro Aggressions	Counselors/ Faculty/ Program
Personal Counseling/ Experience with a Counselor	Self/ Spirituality/ Coping Skills	Intentional Self Disclosure	Isolating Experience	To Educating Majority/ To Advocacy of Minority	Past Minority Experience	Counseling Norms vs. Cultural Norms	Peers/ Counselors in Training
Reason for Becoming a Counselor in Training	Faculty, Supervisors, Internship, Program (positive and not)	Fear of Rejection	Relational Experience	Of Speaking as a Member of the Minority	Level of Comfort with Minority Group	Value Conflict/ Sense of Self as Counselor	
	Cohort/ Peers (positive and not)			To Others	Level of Comfort with Majority Group	Sharing the Minority Experience	
Quitting/ Questioning							

Figure 5. Final Essential, Incidental, and Sub- Themes

Past trauma/lived experiences/minority experiences. This essential theme exemplified the effect of occurrences that happened in the past that could be classified as traumatic or as oppression due to minority identity. The participants revealed ways in which their past was effecting them in their counseling programs (*Effect in class/Program*), how *Personal Counseling/Experience with a Counselor* effected their choice to emulate the counseling as a helper, and how their past often reflected their *Reason for Becoming a Counselor in Training*. Through the stories the participants chose to share, it became clear that their histories were as much a part of their experiences in the counseling program as their current realities were.

Support and validation. The minority students that were interviewed shared their personal perceptions of **Support and Validation** within their counseling programs. Many of the participants shared their experience of *Lack of and Seeking other Like*

Self/Loneliness. The participants were unable to find a group of people within their programs who could directly identify with their minority statuses. The lack of minority representation often led to an overwhelming sense of loneliness. For some, when the people within their programs were not able to offer support or validation, they could turn to their own *Self/Spirituality/Coping Skills* as a means of coping within the master's program.

Faculty, Supervisors, Internship, Program and *Cohort/Peers* could either provide support and validation for the participants or add to the general sense of isolation that occurred for minorities.

Congruence/coming out/being open. The participants in this study did not perceive the privilege of freely speaking and sharing within the counseling classroom. Instead, the participants spoke about the intense process of *Choosing to Speak or Remain Silent in Class* that occurred every time they were expected to share in class. They had to choose whether they wanted to allow their classmates, faculty, or program see their minority identities and how and when they wanted to share (Intentional Self-Disclosure). A major part of choosing not to be open within the counseling program had to do with the *Fear of Rejection* students experienced.

Critical incident/ defining moment. Each participant shared a moment within their experience of being a minority student within a master's counseling program that significantly impacted their outlook. While there were a few participants who shared *Affirming/Confirming Experiences* or *Relational Experiences*, a majority of students had *Isolating Experiences* that occurred through blatant oppressive, microaggressive, or

prejudiced acts committed by faculty or peers. These moments were critical in shaping the overall experience of the participants.

Responsibility. All of the participants discussed the great sense of **Responsibility** they felt within their master's programs. There was a responsibility *To Authenticity of Self*, meaning participants wanted to be true to themselves even when it was hard to do so. The participants also shared their need *To Educating Majority/To Advocacy of Minority*. As one of the only or few members of their minority, students wanted to promote understanding among the majority members. Students also discussed the responsibility *Of Speaking as a Member of the Minority*. There seemed to be a general fear that individualized opinions and stories would be attributed to the minority as a whole. This added to the weight of the participants' shared stories within the counseling classroom. Finally, there was a sense of responsibility *To Others*. Participants shared their need to help, support, and persevere for the sake of other people within their lives.

Relationship with minority status. A major component effecting the experiences of the participants was their Relationship with Minority Status. The *Length of Time* each participant had been a minority determined whether they could find strength or coping skills from their *Past Minority Experience*. Participants who had never identified as a minority before starting their master's program found a hard time with their *Level of Comfort with Minority Group*. While participants who were used to being a minority and surviving in an environment in which they were the "other," were effected by their *Level of Comfort with Majority Group*. The participants' relationship with

Cultural Norms existent within their counseling programs were directly impacted by their minority identity.

Cultural norms. As minority students, the participants were able to identify Cultural Norms that exist within the field of counseling that majority members might not have recognized. For example, the languaging used within counseling such as Marriage Counseling can be felt as a *Counseling Microaggression* toward students who are not legally allowed to marry or choose to have relationships outside of the standard definition of marriage. The participants were tasked with making sense out of *Counseling Norms* that differed from *Cultural Norms*, such as not prying into the private lives of strangers. The field of counseling exists with its own set of values that might conflict with the values of minority students causing a *Value Conflict/Sense of Self as Counselor*. Finally, some minority counselors in training may believe it is their duty to inform and share their successes as in order to offer support to minority clients. However, *Sharing the Minority Experience* in the form of offering advice is not congruent with the expectations of counseling.

Expectations. The participants shared their preconceived Expectations of Counselors/ Faculty/ Program and Peers/Counselors in Training. A belief seemed to exist that people within the field of counseling would be at a higher level than the general public. Participants shared their false expectations of counselors, counselor educators, and peers being more multiculturally sensitive and informed.

Quitting/questioning. Some of the participants shared their experience of questioning their choice to become counselors and contemplating quitting their master's counseling programs. *Quitting/Questioning* is the only incidental theme that emerged

from this study. Although it was at first formed as an essential theme, participants shared their experiences with Quitting/Questioning had to do with their own self-doubt rather than their minority identities. As some participants did relate to this theme, it seemed important to keep the theme while recognizing its difference from the essential themes.

Impact of research: Participants

Many of the participants spoke about the impact of being a member of this study. It seemed as though the positive impact was three-fold. Participants valued talking to someone about their experiences, the opportunity to feel like they were making a difference, and finding solidarity with other self-identified minority students. Beth stated she believed the topic of this study and the themes that were produced would be helpful for others:

BETH: I think it's important to be aware of, that people have, that we feel some of those things. [...] It helps get perspective, I might be a minority in some things but in other things I'm not a minority. Where others are, I just think a lot of the stuff is good things to consider, so it's good thing for you to be studying, looking at. It's a good topic.

Ysera spoke about the positive impact of reading about other students' experiences that were similar to theirs. They also pondered if students atypical to the classification of minority might be experiencing the same things:

YSERA: I just, I feel like, you've helped me. I mean, when I got to read those themes and especially when I got to read the quotes from other people, it felt nice to know that even though we're all across America, I guess, that we share a common thing. Maybe that's how all of us feel even if we're not minorities, like everyone probably feels like, you know, where is my place in this? But there is a place for everyone. And it's nice to see that.

Rose had a similar response to Ysera. She explained how important it was for her to find people within the study who could relate to her experience. She cited the theme of

Lack of and Seeking Others Like Self/Loneliness and how participating in this study

allowed her to alleviate some of the loneliness and isolation she was feeling:

ROSE: It's cool because when I talk about being a part of a research project, I tell people how excited I am to be part of this and how it's like I'm immortalized, but I'm immortalized with all these other people that are going through experiences even though they're different from mine or maybe they're similar in some ways. Of course they are. But having that sense of, "Yeah, we're in this together." This shared experience is really quite profound for me as somebody that's struggling with that loneliness piece. But also, because I feel like people that are minorities, it's hard for us to find communities sometimes. So in and of itself, I think that this project has really made a difference in the sense of community and how we're all together and reading each other's accounts and part of the themes and not feeling like our experience is exclusive to us going, "Oh, yeah. I resonate with that. Yeah, okay. Cool. Totally."

Mary reflected on the growth she had experienced throughout the year and attributed part of it to participating in this study. She explained how the interviews allowed her the opportunity to reflect on her experiences within her master's program. She believed her ability to take ownership over her experience had to do with her reflection:

MARY: I'm happy that you're doing this. I thought it was a really great idea that you reached out to counseling students across state lines to see really that we are not just like one central area but that this is occurring everywhere basically. [...] It's been an interesting experience and made me reflect more on myself as a graduate student and what I want to achieve and reflect more about myself and my personality, what I believe in. [...] I enjoyed talking to you. It's been helpful for myself. Instead of just being like screw all these people and like "F you" and "I'm just going to be whatever," instead of taking a negative and kind of bitter-feeling approach to my graduate program like, "Well, in this situation, this is how I feel. Maybe I can do something about it. I'm going to try. If it works, it works, and if not, I'm going to keep being myself and getting through this graduate program..."

Similar to Mary, Dave and Olivia shared how being a part of this research process allowed for greater reflection on own experiences:

DAVE: It's been really interesting, honestly. Just to have someone kinda poke into your life, grab a couple of things, and poke out, it makes your mind wonder

as to what the final piece is going to look like [...] This has been pretty cool. It sparks a lot of thought. I remember the first [interview]. I really reflected on it that night, and it distracted me from my homework, but it was a good distraction.

Olivia spoke about the enlightenment that occurred for her throughout her participation in this research. She explained she did not often think about herself as a minority, though she did understand the oppression she faced as an androgynous lesbian woman. In addition, Olivia again related to the loneliness theme, as it seemed to be most potent for her experience:

OLIVIA: The only thing that comes to mind is the word "enlightening" because I don't think about my minority status on a day-to-day basis, so to sit down and talk with someone for 10 to 30 minutes, whatever, about it and actually think, "How does it effect me and what are some examples that have actually happened in my life?" It's been enlightening. The loneliness thing, I was like, "Well, I'm really am lonely." I thought about that for a while, and I was like, "Would it be different if I had a class that was full of all lesbians and gay men? Oh my God, like how awesome would that be?" Nothing against straight people, but it's just like going into this situation, you already have this mindset of like, "I'm gonna be the only person" and prepare yourself for that. So I would say that this whole process has just been very enlightening for me to think about myself as a minority person. And I don't think about myself as a minority person, I guess, because I am White. So I do have that privilege. I think about my sex more than I think about my gender and my sexual orientation sometimes. So I just don't think about myself as a minority person, and I don't know why that is. I don't know if it's easier to get through life not thinking about it that way.

Gee found pride in being a part of this study. He thought the topic was important and hoped his story would help other minority students. He stated he felt "special" by being a participant:

GEE: I think that the thing that I would like to share about it is, receiving your e-mail and seeing the themes and going through this entire process and being a part of it, it made me proud. And it's like I hope that whatever you do with your research and whatever direction it takes that it will help somebody and being a part of that made me proud. And you know, it's like the kind of thing I want to go and tell my mommy about. "I was a part of that research project!" [laughs] You know what I mean? So I feel really included and kind of special. I appreciate the opportunity to share my experiences hopefully it will help somebody.

Amy saw discrepancies in her **Expectations** for counselors and the ways in which participants felt they were being treated. She hoped the study would allow for counselor educators and counselors-in-training to modify their prejudicial behavior and create safe spaces for all students:

AMY: I think this is a great research topic, because in counseling- and I might have said this in the beginning too- we're supposed to be the most non-judgmental people out there. We're supposed to be the most accepting people. We're the ones who help people be accepting, or if they want to be. I mean, look where they are and whatever their goals are. I think this is interesting because it points out that even though this is our profession, we're still human and we still grew up in different environments. But to bring it to surface is really important.

Mae described her surprise at seeing ten different self-identified minorities being able to create the themes existent within this research. She noted the impact of reading about other people with whom she could relate:

MAE: There's so many different types of minority statuses and you wouldn't expect every single person to have the, basically, underlying same feelings. Looking through the themes that you've created, it was really surprising that I could identify with other minority status members even though they were of a completely different type of minority. Yet, we all had the same feelings. So, in learning that, through this study because I wouldn't of have learned that otherwise. I had to be a part of this study to know that. [...] Well, you brought us together, through your study, and we found out that we had things in common even though we've never met. So I thought that was really cool and really special. And, I liked this study. I thought, "I feel really honored to have been included."

Relational Model of Gender Awareness Development by Comstock et al. (2003) in

Relation to the Participants and Research Findings

Comstock et al.'s (2003) Relational Model was presented in Chapter One and Figure 1 as a way in which the participants in this study would be examined. Although the model was not reintroduced until Chapter Five, it was a component of the entire research and writing process. First, each participant was selected with attention to where they might fall on Comstock et al.'s model. As it was important to represent diversity of

experience among the participants, model placement helped in the selection process. For example, Amy was someone who sounded as though she was in the stage of *dissonance* (first contact with her own privilege) while Matthew seemed to be in *integration* (awareness of marginalized identity while maintaining relationship with perceived oppressors). For the sake of the research, I did not choose people who appeared to be in the same model stages.

Another way in which I utilized this model was in the selection of quotes for each participant. It was important to me to explore the process of experience minority students may face. The interviews were conducted over the course of two semesters; therefore, the experiences of the participants expanded and allowed for a more in-depth exploration. I was able to watch as some participants began to cycle through multiple stages of Comstock et al.'s model. Participants who had not experienced minority identities before or who had recently begun to realize their minority identities were in the *exposure* stage. As their semesters and time in their master's programs continued, they began to fall into other stages such as *dissonance* or *denial*. These new realizations or struggles were important for me to express in the quotes I chose and the themes that were created.

Comstock et al.'s (2003) Relational Model of Gender Awareness Development described the processes both the group in power and the minority group may experience when faced with education about privilege. As the participants in this study progressed in their master's programs and reflected on their time during our interviews, it became clear that their experiences coincided with Comstock et al.'s model. This model influenced the selection of participants as well as the quotes and themes that were created from the interviews.

Implications

There are strengths and limitations to the methodology utilized within this study. Most notably, phenomenology is not meant to be generalizable (van Manen, 1990). Participant experiences are true to only themselves. The themes created are representative of all ten participants and may resonate with the experiences of other self-identified minority counseling students but are not intended to be generalized. Though there are implications that may be explored, they are ideas and wonderments instead of factual findings.

The implications of this study may be numerous. First and foremost, the use of self-identified minorities as the subject pool has not, to the researcher's knowledge, been utilized within counselor education. The wide range of people who identify with the term minority or different was remarkable. Nearly thirty master's students from across the country identified with the given terms and responded to the call for participants. The ten that were chosen were the broadest possibilities for this research. Racial, cultural, sexual, physical ability, and religious minorities were able to offer experiences that were vastly different while maintaining a solid agreement on the eight essential themes presented in this research.

Perhaps counselor educators might broaden and redefine the ways in which they identify minority students. This research exemplified the ability for students to feel like minorities regardless of the societal definition of such. Counselor educators might be attending to students within the counseling classroom who do not identify as minorities while others are not given the support they need.

In addition to the possibility of a redefinition of minority, counselor educators might gain a better understanding of the complex experience of minority students. Although some of the participants classified their time within their master's programs as overall positive, each participant maintained the same eight essential thematic experiences. Perhaps the most tangible example of the need for counselor educators to remain cognizant of minority students is the theme of **Congruence/Coming Out/Being Open**. The participants shared the immense challenges present within *Choosing to Speak or Remain Silent in Class*. An immediate consideration for educators should be the role of class participation in student learning outcomes, class expectations, and course grades. Minority students might be fully present and engaged in their learning process while also choosing to remain silent in class. Without systemic support, it seems unfair for students to be graded on verbal class participation. In addition, counselor educators may choose to focus on providing an open and supportive environment in which students feel comfortable to participate in class discussions.

The theme of **Support and Validation** and its subtheme *Lack of and Seeking Others Like Self/Loneliness* represents the greatest opportunity for counselor education programs. Participants within this study spoke about the need for more diverse faculty and students and systemic support initiatives. Counselor educators might look toward their own programs and determine under-represented populations. This awareness could then be transferred to faculty search committees and student admission processes. Systemic support systems such as upper classman mentorship might lead to first year master's students feeling more supported and less lonely.

The field of counseling as a whole might choose to redefine or relanguage some of its historical norms. The theme of **Cultural Norms** and subtheme of *Counseling Micro Aggressions* brought awareness to the ethnocentric and heteronormative practices instilled within counseling. Terms such as “marriage counseling” can cause students who are not legally allowed to marry pain and discomfort. It might behoove the field of counseling to look at its norms and their effect on minority people.

It is important to note while some participants classified their experiences as positive, all had the same core themes emerge. Whether the participant found their experience to be positive, negative, or challenging, they were still likely to experience the same core emotions such as Loneliness or Fear. Olivia spoke about her positive experience as a counseling master’s student:

OLIVIA: I would say just that overall, it's been extremely positive. So I think typically with minority groups, we tend to focus on what's going wrong. What are people doing that's making you feel bad about you being a minority person? I'm almost done with my second semester, and I haven't had a negative experience. It could be the field that I'm going into, counseling. People tend to be more open and accepting, but I think that, that's more important, in my eyes, is the fact that I am having a positive experience. And I don't feel I'm being treated differently than my heterosexual peers. So overall, that's my big statement. It's just that I've had a good experience, and I feel I will continue to have a good experience.

Hopefully many students can relate to Olivia’s positivity. Olivia experienced the eight essential themes regardless of her positive experience. None of the themes are inherently negative or challenging, though many participants did represent them as so. Students may not evidence their struggles and others may eternalize them through a positive mind frame. Counselor educators must attend to the specific needs of their minority students.

Limitations

The results of this study represent the experiences of ten self-identified minority counseling students. Although it is the researcher's assumption that the results may be broad enough to represent many different minority students, that assumption has not been confirmed. In addition, there are numerous ways in which students may identify as minorities. All races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and cultures have not been studied within this research. Future research studies may choose to confirm the themes with an even broader pool of participants.

Conclusion

Ten participants from across the United States who identified as minorities were studied in order to ascertain the core of their lived-experiences within counseling master's programs. Hermeneutic Phenomenology was utilized to ascertain eight essential themes: **Past Trauma/Lived Experiences/Minority Experiences, Support and Validation, Congruence/Coming Out/Being Open, Critical Incident/Defining Moment, Responsibility, Relationship with Minority Status, Cultural Norms, and Expectations.** One incidental theme emerged: **Quitting/Questioning.** Although the participants identified as minorities in a wide range of ways, the core of their shared experiences were similar. Minority students had challenges and triumphs within their counseling master's programs that were integral to their identities.

Chapter VI

Creation of the Ethnodrama and Script

Introduction

The Hermeneutic phenomenological portion of this study was completed and reviewed in Chapter Five. The next step in this research process was to create an ethnodrama based on the participants' lived experiences and the phenomenological findings. Within this chapter I explained the process of creating the ethnodrama, present the ethnodrama script, and discuss the implications of ethnodrama as a form of research in this study.

Creation of the Ethnodrama

I did not begin to construct the ethnodrama script until after the phenomenological study was completed. This allowed for a moment of pause to reflect on the research, participants, and begin to explore the possibilities existent within a play. I thought about which experiences from each participant resonated most with me. I began to contemplate contrasting stories; for example, feeling judged based on Christian beliefs in contrast to feeling judged based on atheist beliefs. I pulled experiences from each participant that exemplified an aspect of the themes existent in the phenomenological results. Next, I began editing the stories into monologues and placing them throughout a first and second act. The process felt organic and began to flow when the overarching structure started to emerge. The first scene in the first act introduces each participant and a story behind their minority identity. The act one, scene two explained the experiences participants had within their specific programs. While some participants reported positive experiences, others had isolating experiences. These experiences then transferred into act two, scene

one in which participants explored changes within their experiences. Act two, scene two allowed for a finalization of experiences. Finally, act two, scene three offered advice to other minority counseling master's students.

Each participant's story was written and placed strategically in order to provide maximum emotional connection for the audience. Characters within the play tell stories that are climactic and result in a finalized exemplification of their lived experiences. Although the monologues have been edited and some have been rearranged from original dialogue, they are all verbatim from the thirty interviews conducted over the past two semesters. The longest interview process with a participant was about four hours long. Each participant was given about 8 minutes of dialogue within the play. I believe the stories chosen were the most relevant examples of the final themes of the phenomenological exploration and the overall sense of each person.

After the play was constructed, I sent it to participants in order to allow them an opportunity to give permission of the finalization of the script. This process served as the third and final member check of the entire research process. Although it was not mandatory for participants to expand on their permission, they were able to ask for edits or clarification based on comfort.

Dave was the only participant to respond to my inquiry about possible edits. He asked for a word clarification and the omission of the city where his classmates went to a conference. He stated he did not want his peers to feel "offended" by his choice of words. I made the changes he requested and he gave me his permission to proceed.

Ethnodrama Script

The ethnodrama script is presented in the following section as it would be published in terms of breaks in pages and formatting.

Here I Am
Kirsten LaMantia

Playwright's note:

The play is constructed from direct quotes from over 30 interviews exploring the experiences of ten self-identified minority counseling master's students.

Characters –Listed are self-identified characteristics that contribute to feeling marginalized and isolated.

Gee – African American, male, late fifties.

Ysera – White, non-binary transgender person, has a processing disorder, early twenties. Prefers 'they' and 'them' as pronouns.

Mary – Latina, woman, mid-twenties.

Matthew – Native American, male, gay, early thirties.

Mae – White, woman, atheist, mid-twenties.

Rose – White, woman, Buddhist, thirties.

Beth – White, woman, Mormon, thirties.

Olivia – White, androgynous woman, lesbian, twenties.

Amy – White, woman, attends a historically Black college or university, thirties.

Dave – White, man, in wheelchair, late twenties. Can move head, neck, and limited use of arms.

Act I

Scene I: Identity

(Scene opens with each character in their own home spaces, going about their business. One might be making tea, getting help from a friend, meditating, getting ready for the day, etc. Each action represents the story being told. Lights focus on whoever is talking)

DAVE: I was on my way to the city, actually. And I went off the side of the road, flipped my parents' minivan. At the time, I was driving it. And I flipped it straight over the top, like twice. And I flew up into the dash, dislocated the neck. It was... I don't know if I can draw my fists together, but it was totally displaced. My top vertebrae, my C4, went down in front of the C5, like this, and I was trapped with my head to the side in the back of the van. And in that vehicle I didn't like wearing my seat belt because, at the time, I was like 260 pounds because I had just gotten done playing football.

And let's see... Yeah, I wasn't wearing my seat belt because it made me all claustrophobic and stuff, and that's kind of what made me fly around in the vehicle. I got kind of lucky because I laid there for over an hour, almost two, listening to the cars drive by. And they couldn't see me because it was one of those little slight curves in the road and it was just a really remote country road. Highly traveled, but in a tough spot to see. Luckily a guy that was... I actually kind of like flipped up over his long country driveway... luckily he was pulling out to go to third shift. He saw something that just didn't look right. Because the van landed on its wheels. All the exterior lights went off so for all he knew, it was maybe two teenagers parking. But yeah, so he called it in to the deputy. Deputy comes out. Just kind of poking around. Didn't really expect to find much. He shined his light down in there, found me. And the crazy thing about it is, at that C4 level, you've got the breathing issues that start coming in.

Until... it was right when he got there that I started getting labored breathing. But yet, two hours went by and I didn't have any issues. I was just really dazed. Hit my head real hard. I had a big gash on my head. But the only other scratch on my body was a little gash on my knee. No broken bones. It was just... it was weird. So yeah, they airlifted me. Luckily it's only like a 20-minute airlift from where I was to the city, and I was at a top-notch hospital. The care was great there. Yeah, outstanding. And I'm trying to think... I feel like I've told this story so many times. I mean, it was traumatic but I wouldn't call it as traumatic as strength and conditioning for college football. So I popped up from it.

ROSE: We took a field trip my senior year of high school and we ended up going down south of here. We went there and there just happened to be a Buddhist priest if you will, a Rinpoche, giving a talk, and my instructor, who was Buddhist said, "Well, why don't we go? Let's see what it is."

We went and everything that he said was like, "This is why this happens. This is why that happens. Life is characterized by suffering and here is why - greed, ignorance, hatred, desire, and if you really think about it, if you analyze it, you see the truth in this," And the more I sat and listened to him and asked questions, the more I realized, "This is

what I've been telling myself all along," so it already aligned with my own belief system. Then I took refuge in the Buddhist practice. It's called "taking refuge" and you take refuge and you proclaim yourself as a Buddhist and I did that maybe a day after.

Ever since then, it's been a journey to understand what that means for me and I've always been really analytical. I've always really been interested in the mind and how it works, so I'm interested in neurology - not that I understand it - but it's there, all of that. It's like the perfect storm between Buddhist philosophy and science and psychology and it's a very empirically-based religion. I hate to call it a religion, but it's very scientifically-minded, psychologically-minded so it seems so natural that where I am spiritually is where I want to be professionally. That's everything that led up to now...

GEE: I remember when there was a time I was in active addiction, I was doing coke on a regular basis and I was tired. I was asking God to give me a sign of what I should do, and I remember looking up in the sky for the lightning and all that stuff, this powerful message, and I ran a stop sign. I didn't know that was what the message was until later on, because I still kept falling down. I lost everything.

I didn't believe in God until I got into recovery. I went to treatment in September of 1996, and I reconnected with God on a beach in Boca Raton, Florida when there was a storm coming. The storm was so powerful, you could hardly walk against the wind. You know, the kind you have to turn your back for fear of being blown away, and you can see the storm across the ocean coming from Miami, and the lightning and all that stuff. The water was so high, I couldn't even see the sand. And we were just on the same beach the day before for meditation and they let us play in the sand on the beach. That's when I heard this voice talking to me, and I realized that voice always talked to me. I just never listened. So that's how I reconnected with God, and it's a God of my understanding, not anybody else's. I don't go to church or any of that stuff and I'm not, like, a religious zealot. Very seldom do I even talk about what I believe because I don't need to. It's just for me.

YSERA: This was two weeks ago. My parents are like, "We can pick you up and go for dinner, we can pick you up, go to the hotel and drop our stuff off." And I felt kind of mischievous because I picked the hotel option so I can corner them at the hotel but I didn't mean it to be like a bad thing. I just... that's the place that I can get them alone and then we can go do something nice... if they still want to even go near me. So I was like, "Okay, I have something important to tell you. It's been pressing on me for a long time." I was like "I'm transgender, "and they were just like, "I don't really know what that means." I was like, "Oh, God. I'm going to have a lot of back tracking to do." So, they had a lot of questions, and my mom started crying and I felt kind of sick because I was like, "What does that mean? What are you crying about? Have I disappointed you completely?" It was overall good, anything where you are not being kicked out or your funding for school is taken away or you are disowned it's good to me. I was thinking about all my friends who rely on donations mostly because they are on the streets. I'm like that's not me... so it's good.

MATTHEW: I was born in the South Central US, raised there. My dad is full blood Cherokee he wasn't a big part of my life growing up. My mom is part Cherokee and she

is very interested in sort of keeping those connections but at a distance. It wasn't until sort of later in life that she was like "you know you're an Indian and you need to connect to that," and she ended up marrying another guy who was a full blood Choctaw. So a lot of that was sort of... what is my...what do I look like as a Cherokee kid in a Choctaw town? Because we lived in a town where everyone was Choctaw and so it was kind of interesting to create that sort of connection to the culture of being in a tribe, being connected. Everybody knows each other, everybody knows every one's business. It's very small and local, it's also very poor and so there are those connections of everyone does for everyone else, but also we don't really have a lot to go around and we don't really have a lot of expectations for ourselves. And I think that's even true for my parents. My parents never thought about a future per se, like if you got a job that didn't lay you off, like maybe that was as good as it gets. No idea what is a career or anything like that and so that was sort of what I was raised in.

MAE: From a very young age I knew that there were different religions and different beliefs and so I kind of always wondered, "Why are there different interpretations?" So that was kind of always in the back of my mind. When I was five I stopped believing in Santa Claus and I was like "Hmm. Magic doesn't exist anymore, so is religion really true?" That's when I started first questioning it, when I was five years old.

Then, by the time I was 13, I started really digging into different religions. Between 12 and 13 I really started just diving into it and I became really interested in Islam. Oddly, I think it might have been because 9/11. So I started really digging into that, and Judaism, and just all different kinds of stuff. I was just like "There are so many different interpretations. They can't all be real." Everyone believes this, depending on what geographical location they grew up in and who their parents were, and so like if I was born in India, I might be Hindu. Also when I was around the age of 13 I was just like... I never... I did look into Christianity and I immediately discounted that because I'd never been taught, so that's one thing, but then also just the miracles, and it's just all in magic and superstition and I just was like... I don't know. Then when I was 14, that's when I announced that I was atheist to my parents. They're not happy about it, to say the least, but they've come to accept it.

BETH: I identify as Mormon or LDS. A majority of the community where my program is are LDS. I was not raised around here though like a lot of people in my program are so there are things about... sometimes I feel like I get lumped into a group of people when my experiences within the religious context are different so my way of maybe expressing it or it maybe even my thoughts on certain things are a little bit different even though I've been given that label. I think it's commonly known with our religion, that our religion would say like, "homosexuality is a sin" so that might be like the religious doctrine of the church. I'm just going to be super open about it here but I might get emotional.

My mom will be like:

CAST MEMBER: This person's bad because they're gay.

BETH: My mom will make comments like that and I'm like, "Mom, you don't even know that person. You don't even know anybody that's gay so how can you sit there and make

judgments on who they are and what kind of person they are just because of that?" And I will say to her things like, "We don't know what they've been through. We don't know where they come from. We don't know, what is their choice, what is not their choice. You don't know anything about them or their backgrounds so how can you say that?" I value my religion and I'm not willing to just not be a part of that. So it's like grappling with that a little bit. How do I be in my religion that I value and love and make sense of this other stuff and bring understanding to other people?

OLIVIA: Being a gay person, it wasn't always easy to be so open and accepting of who I was. So what people think of as your "coming out process," even though you have to come out all the time... There's not just one coming out process. There's multiple, for the rest of your life, and a lot of people kind of forget about that. But the one that people are usually talking about, the one where it's like, "When you first realized you were gay, and you told your parents and all that stuff." When I think back to that time in my life and what I went through to get to a healthy place where I was accepting of me being a lesbian woman, and even harder accepting being an androgynous woman. That was even harder than accepting being gay, I think, to some degree. I couldn't accept that I liked masculine things until I accepted myself as a gay woman, and then I realized I wasn't alone. There were other butch androgynous lesbians out there, and this wasn't just a weird thing I do.

My mother and my father have always been supportive of me. It wasn't easy when I first came out. I'm not going to say that. It took some time for them to adjust, but they were never like, "This is a sin. You're disgusting. You can't bring anyone around." It was never like that for me. So I think knowing that I had the love and support of my parents who... That's all any kid ever wants, is the love and support of their parents. So it makes me a lot more confident, and that has definitely helped me grow and develop into the person I am today. So now I'm not scared. Internally I know. Yeah, people love me and accept me for who I am. Not everyone's going to love me and accept me for who I am, but that's okay because I have people who do.

MARY: I've always lived in very homogenous communities. I'm Mexican, I was born in the US but grew up in Mexico, small, rural community, kind of town. When I was 14, my mom ended up asking me if I wanted to go to the US to live with my relatives for a year, learn English, kind of polish everything, go back home to Mexico. I was like, "Yeah, whatever." So, I left the country for a year. I thought it would be fun and exciting. We ended up all staying. And from being rooted in that Mexican culture and then, I guess, really being like the migrant experience, because for generations my family had been, like, coming and going, coming and going between the US and Mexico, like from my great grandparents time. We come, we leave and then we come back, and then we leave. A lot of my classmates didn't see their parents for years. And I was fortunate, my dad always has... he's a legal resident so I could see him more often, I could see him maybe once or twice a year. So, I'm very rooted in that Mexican migrant experience, I guess. And when I came to this city and this neighborhood, it's mostly Mexican-American, Mexican. I went to a small Catholic high school and I grew up very Catholic back home. And in Catholic high school, you need to read, speak Spanish in order to be kind of accepted into the school because they have a dual language system. So it was all like a 100% Mexican.

And then going to college, I was the only... one of the few Hispanic girls in the school. And that's where I had some of my previous experiences because I was finally like in the big community where I was more of a minority where I have to adapt to other people's culture or another language and that's where I really experienced the micro-aggressions and blatant racism from my peers, from my professors, from the administration. I was put in a lower level English class, even though I was a straight A English student in high school. For some reason they thought because English was my second language that I didn't know how to speak English so instead of being able to get my English credit in one semester, they made me take two for a year.

AMY: Well it's my first semester. I've only had three classes so far, but I'm the only White person in my class. On my first day of class, once people started coming in it was just like okay, okay I knew I was going to a traditionally Black school, but I just thought it would be a little more diverse. Even though I knew the tradition of this school I just ... I went to a state school for my undergrad and it was just every class was completely diverse and it's just a mixture of everybody. And so I was like okay. Then I get embarrassed really easily and I'm kind of shy and I turn bright red and I'm like great now it's even more noticeable that I'm going to be the shy embarrassed one and I felt like I just stuck out.

The only time the racial issue comes into play I think it's more of me. Because especially with everything that's going on right now, I mean, you know my whole school does silent protests and things like that for the Ferguson cop and racial shootings and things like that. It's almost uncomfortable for me to go to class because I don't want to identify with being White. Like it's hard being the only person. The singled out person. So, that's... I mean no one says anything. Everybody treats me as a friend and as an equal and everyone's super nice, but I don't know if it would be the same if I knew them outside of school. I don't know how we would all act.

Scene II: Counseling Program

(Characters' environments are now reflecting school, counseling sites, and professional atmospheres)

ROSE: I've always been really interested in architecture, in spiritual architecture, and spiritual art. I had just gotten done with an interview at another Christian-based university and I had just been accepted and I was like, "There's just something that doesn't feel quite right about it. I'm going to go give myself a self-tour at this other university," and then it just snowed and it's beautiful. The architecture and the churches and the chapels and the snow falling and the Christmas lights and I was like, "It's Hogwarts. You have to be here." It was great. I could just feel it radiating in every beam of the buildings and every - the look on people's faces as they walked through campus and even the crosses. These are things that I used to fight against when I was younger and I used to be like, "Oh, those Christians, they're screwy," or whatever. Now that I'm getting older I'm going, "You know what? They're not screwy. They're different. They may believe in a different system than I do but that doesn't mean that I can't connect with them." I've been there almost a year and there has never been a doubt that this is where I

know I need to be. Every day there is something that happens on a spiritual level that tells me, "This is it. This is exactly where I need to be, how I need to be doing it."

MATTHEW: The second challenge though is I know that I'm gay and I know that I'm out and I feel like should I be the person to say "hey what about the gay kids"? And from human development onward I feel like in almost every class, I've had to ask myself, is it my responsibility to be the representative of the minority in my class? And I always sort of challenge the class and see if anybody else is going to say anything. Like is somebody going to mention gay kids? Or is the gay guy going to mention gay kids or gay clients? And so far I'm the only one who brings it up. I feel...one that's good because then we are talking about it, and it's a conversation that happened in the classroom. Two, it's a little frustrating that I have to bring it up. I think that that has been when I felt the most marginalized I guess and it's interesting because it is not harmful. I don't feel threatened. I feel disappointed I guess. Does that make sense?

MAE: In my previous master's program, I had to leave there, actually, because I had a conflict with a professor who... He kind of irked me when he would start preaching in the class. He came to the university because it was a religious university, Lutheran, and he felt like he could be more open about his own beliefs in class and he announced that the very first day. Since then, he really talked a lot about Jesus and a lot about God. It was just really, really random and it made me feel really uncomfortable. I have a background in philosophy, in religious philosophy, because that's my other major in undergrad. Even then, no one ever preached to me or was trying to, I don't know, basically tell me the history of this person and just how I should use him in my counseling sessions to connect with clients and stuff like that. I was just like, this is not relevant at all to me because I'm never going to use Christian counseling ever and, it wasn't a Christian counseling class.

YSERA: I call myself non-binary trans person and as far as I know in my program there's no one else that identifies like that. Sometimes it does cause some trouble, unfortunately, it's like mis-gendering kind of confusion because it's not like trans man, trans woman, it's something in the middle. Then also I do have a few, I guess, disabilities. I'm not sure if that's the correct word but I do suffer from PTSD and sometimes that causes issues within the program. I do have a learning disability, it's like a processing disorder.

So, I posted on Facebook this kind of chart, like, when is it okay to use the R-word and of course all going back to, "No, it's not okay." Then this person from my program commented and said:

CAST MEMBER: This chart is retarded.

YSERA: and said the word and I was like, "Oh." I tried to inform him... I was like, "That word does hurt me," and then all my friends came online that have learning disabilities and they were like, "That's never okay to say," and then he deleted it. He was, like, not taking responsibility. I sent a message and I was like, "I just wanted to say one more time." He was like:

CAST MEMBER: It was meant to be ironic.

YSERA: and I was like, "I understand, but no," and then he deleted me from Facebook and I was like, "That's going fun for you maybe we have to be partners in class sometime."

BETH: My supervisor at my site, she is very much like... I would say tries to be understanding of the LDS culture, is open to that, but also I felt like lots of comments that she would make were trying to let me know that my way of thinking was wrong. For example, I had a client that was gay and because maybe I'm not as familiar with that, I think that I made a comment one time in one of my notes that said she was LDS and she had said that because she chose a different lifestyle, that her family didn't accept her. I had written that in my notes and my supervisor assumed that I had made that comment like it was for choice that she was gay and I was making that assumption. And it wasn't ill intended on her part at all but I just would get undertones a lot of like:

CAST MEMBER: I wonder when people are going to realize that this is not a choice

BETH: and I felt like it wasn't like she was really making those comments. I think that's what she really believed but I felt like she was trying to educate me out of my religion and culture when that's already something that I feel, you know?

GEE: I had a bad experience in class with a peer. It was another adult learner in this class and I felt empathy for her because she was struggling with the here and now process. Because I like to help people and so forth I kind of was trying to start a conversation with her. I started off the conversation by saying, "We're a lot alike." She's a White older lady. I'm Black, of course. And she looked at me with, I can't even describe the look. I just felt like she was looking down on me and she was like:

CAST MEMBER: We're nothing alike.

GEE: I was like, wow. Before she even knew what I was really trying to say. And I'm like, "I'm so sorry," and I quickly walked away. But it really hurt me deeply. I had to actually process that with my support network to get through the feeling and the things that it brought up for me. So when I came back to class, I am the kind of person that, she hurt me, I will leave you alone. I keep my distance and so forth.

It's like, there are two people in me. There's one that grew up hard, that learned how to protect himself, that learned how to back people away and so forth through anger and so forth. And then this other part of me that wants to do the right thing and live the right way, but I also have this third thing that's called my critical voice. It started running in my head and said:

ALL: You don't belong here. You don't fit in. You shouldn't be doing this.

OLIVIA: So my professor was saying... I love my professor. He's not homophobic any bit at all, and I just love him. He's just so honest about things and stuff, and he said something like:

CAST MEMBER: I want to believe that religious people can believe in traditional marriage and still be accepting.

OLIVIA: So that just struck a nerve with me because I'm very passionate about marriage equality. So I raised my hand, and he knew I was a lesbian because him and I had talked privately after class about something, and I outed myself to him. So I rose my hand. I said, "I disagree with what you're saying. I think that religious people can be kind and nice to gay people and still believe in traditional marriage." I was like, "You cannot be accepting and denying people their basic human rights. You cannot say, 'I accept you, but I still find you different. So therefore, you're not allowed to have the same rights as me because you're different from me.' That's not being accepting. Others disagree with me, I'm sure, but I think that you can be a kind, loving person towards people, but that's not the same as being accepting." I said, "If you changed the word, I would agree with you. You can be nice to gay people and still be a religious person who believes in traditional marriage, but you cannot be a religious person who believes in traditional marriage and be accepting of gay people. The two just don't go together."

MARY: We were doing icebreakers and we wrote something on the paper. What was it? The professor handed out these papers, it was a sentence. You can't tell by looking at me but... and we filled it out. And I wrote something. You won't know by looking at me but I grew up in a very small rural community in Mexico, and the professor was like, "Oh, well, who might it be?" And one of my classmates was like:

CAST MEMBER: Whoa, well, it's Mary. You would have the accent for it.

MARY: And looking back, that is not a big deal, it's not even an issue but I guess I was taken aback a little bit just because in my college experience I was literally discriminated against by some of my college professors with comments like:

CAST MEMBER: Hispanics look alike. You can't speak Spanish in my class. Are you illegal?

MARY: Just very blatant comments in front of the classrooms, in front of large groups of people that kind of made me a little bit sensitive and I'm like, "Really?" But looking back at it, this is not really an issue... but sometimes I feel like I'm a little bit... I don't want to call it oversensitive but I tend to react a little bit more to comments like that, or little situations that sometimes I feel like a micro-aggression.

AMY: (*The song Dramamine by Modest Mouse plays*) At the end of our class last week or a couple of weeks ago everybody had to write down their favorite song before we left class and for class last week our professor played the song and we had to guess everybody in the class like who picked which song. So, she went through all the songs like two minutes of each song and we had to guess who picked that song. And then like advertisements would come on because she was playing Pandora and it would be like a Beach Boys song in the advertisement and everybody looks at me. Just anything that wasn't hip-hop or R&B. I got guessed for like five different songs, because they wouldn't expect a Black person to pick something that would be a White song or something like that. I was like okay. It draws a lot of unwanted attention. But it was just like, I guess for me, the entire thing since it was 27 people, two minutes times 27 and the whole time I felt embarrassed. And so it was just really hard to get through the entire thing. I was so happy when we had a break in the middle so I could re-group. Especially after the first

two or three songs, I knew that everyone was looking for the different people because it would be the easiest to pick out. Not because they were picking on people but that just is what made me feel so uncomfortable the entire time. And then, after class, everyone just joked about it.

MATTHEW: When I go back to my hometown then my sort of native side comes out a little bit more and my connections to my family, my brother and what not. If I'm in the last place I lived, where I have a lot of gay friends, so my sort of gay side comes out and you say you feel "I'm turning the gay up, I'm turning the Indian up" and sometimes in very few context like maybe one or two friends that I have who happen to also be Native and gay where I feel like this combination is an interesting unique identity that we share that experience and so we sort of talk and interact in a different way. And so I think about that and I put that into diversity class, and I'm like this feels so awkward to...Turn to the next chapter where we are going to talk about gay people. The next chapter where we talk about the disabled. The next chapter we are going to talk about Asian Americans and so on. And then I don't know if maybe that's the way it was taught or the way that specific book was, but it felt inauthentic I guess sort of like a zoo. Now moving on to the next one, look at this, ooh, aah!

MAE: I wrote up an official complaint and I had developed a petition. We presented it to the administrators and there was this really big investigation. The teachers actually sat in the class and listened to him teach, and of course when they sat in the class, he didn't bring up religion at all, unlike all the other ones, so it was not really representative. So there was a big thing.

After that, there was an assignment where the teacher created a fake licensing board hearing and she created different scenarios for each person. The scenario she created for me was that I had to pretend I was a counselor who was reported to the licensing board hearing on charges that I was demeaning about someone else's religion and that the client felt that I disregarded her religion and tried to confront her and tried to impose my own beliefs. It wasn't just a regular assignment. That assignment was very, very hard for me because it made me feel like they actually thought that this was a possibility, that I could actually be brought to a licensing board hearing and have my counseling license revoked in the future because I wouldn't be able to deal with someone else's religion. Other people had scenarios that were like, "Oh, they received a gift from a client and they accepted it," or, "Oh, they had a sexual relationship with a client," or something like that. It wasn't anything related to something that they would actually do. Then when I had the licensing board hearing, it was three professors in the room, all three of them were that ones that were like... like one of them was the professor who preached the religion, so it felt like I was really on trial. I broke down, I just cried because it was just so intimidating. That was a really horrific experience for me, it was very traumatic. I wish it hadn't happened. I definitely think it was the main reason I decided to transfer.

DAVE: I love it. Everybody's awesome. Really, they are. You know, it was kind of funny, because the first day I roll into class in summer, our program goes summer, fall, spring, summer, fall, spring. I roll in this first day of summer classes and you know I'm kind of meeting people. I can kind of see it in some of the, you could tell the ones that were just fresh out of undergrad. At least from my perception. It seemed like they were

kind of like, oh! They were kind of surprised. I just could tell that they hadn't seen too many people. I'm 6'5", like 230 right now. And my wheelchair is gargantuan. It was kind of funny to see their reactions to it.

But they're all great people. Treated me just like anybody else. They come up, I live about 30 minutes away so I'm commuting down there. It's saved me a lot of money. But yeah, they come down here every once in a while. We go out to the movies and stuff because I've made friends with, I take advantage of my disability at times. I prey on people that pity me for some reason. [laughs] At the movie theater, when it comes to buying tickets, Wednesdays and Sunday nights, this lady that works lets me in free. That and handicapped placards, I'll never complain about. Even though I don't even have to walk. But I do have an extreme sensitivity to cold... I'm always cold...

But yeah, as far as students go, I couldn't be happier. I think we got an awesome class. And I've heard that from our professors too. We have a really unique, diverse class. There's 14 of us. And I can't say enough about them, really. Especially in the practice counseling. Everybody's really, really open. I think we're just that type of group.

End of Act I

Intermission

Act II

Scene I: Reflection and Expression

(Each person is reflecting on their experiences in a safe space. Home, church, coffee shop, etc.)

DAVE: So... since the last time we talked, I did have an experience... It's not necessarily negative, but it was something that was a little, not irritating, but it was just kind of a letdown. It was basically over spring break. A lot of my classmates had been able to get down to the American Counseling Association Conference. I think I could've made that happen had I known ahead of time that many of them were going. There would've been a lot of hoops to jump through, and I'm still on the whether it would've been possible or not. That was one thing. They almost kept me out of the loop on it and almost assumed that that would've been the case, that I wouldn't have been able to make it. I guess most of my experience was positive up to that point, and then it gave me a letdown. It was like, "Oh shit." I think it's more they didn't know what limitations specifically that I had.

If they were more aware in that realm, they would've known that, hey, this is doable. There was a handful, some of the students I probably hung out with more, not that there's too many cliques evolving. I know of one. He kind of knew that there was a possibility for sure, and I think the outcome of this thing is next year I'm definitely going to the next one. But I had no clue anybody was going. It was my first let down as far as my disability experience in my program. It didn't bother me too much. It was just sort of a missed opportunity, that drive to keep up and prove myself like the rest of them.

MARY: That makes me wonder some time if it's me or is it also even my ethnicity. That one starts coming in a little bit more. It's just people don't like this specific Latina, like this specific Latina character, because I'm not that stereotypical, "Hey, Papi," that kind of Latina, kind of like Sofia Vergara character. Because I'm having these good relationships with people outside of the classroom who most of them happen to be Latino. But other peers who are like not Latino and they're at my program, it's just not happening. So maybe I'm not sure if it's because with my Latino friends we share the cultural background, we understand each other and why sometimes I have to go back home a little bit early because I live with my parents, and it's not that, with those friends who share the same cultural background.

AMY: Yes, it's making me think differently. I've always been pretty easy going to begin with, but I mean and I think more so now. The further I get into this program it's kind of hard to be around a lot of other White people. Like it was hard to be around some White people to begin with or just people in general to begin with, but just like you have friends that just say things without thinking and now when they say things it's just like ... It's a little uncomfortable at first, but now you know you're really making me uncomfortable. You can't just say things, you're hurting people. It makes you look at just diversity and any kind of 'isms. I think it's even harder around family than around your friends. You know because you're not going to change the ways of older people now. It's just uncomfortable and so if those conversations come up I redirect. I'm not even ... well as you can see I kind of do that a lot, but especially I'm not going to start a fight with that,

have a big heated discussion about race or Obama or anything like that just because you're looking at one aspect of the problem. And all you're doing is looking at the problem. You're not trying to find any solutions.

MAE: What happened at my old school, it just really made me question everything that I was... I really questioned even continuing in this program and stuff like that or like even being a counselor because they kind of made me feel also that I wouldn't be able to deal with someone who was religious because I couldn't deal with the professor being religious and stuff like that and preaching in class. They kind of told me:

CAST MEMBER: What if you get a religious client? You're not going to be able to handle them.

MAE: or something. I don't know. It just made me really doubt myself. Right now I'm going into an internship that really bases its whole program on Alcoholics Anonymous so I'm learning more about Alcoholics Anonymous right now. There's that fear again, that I'm not going to be able to do it because it has so much about religion. It kind of requires a belief in a higher power in order to see its effectiveness. I'm just kind of worried that I'm going to get rejected or they're going to find out that I'm an atheist and I don't know. It's like a fear that's really been bugging me, right?

GEE: (*Holds a book of poetry*) You know, I went to treatment in 1996 and poetry became my outlet, a healing outlet for me and I've been writing ever since. It helped me deal with a whole lot of stuff that I probably wouldn't have been able to deal with without writing. It became therapeutic. *Struggling* is one poem that I wrote recently because that's how I felt, that I was struggling because I started my master's program a week later than everybody. It kind of like is almost my life story. The struggling comes with fear, being afraid of failing, being afraid of not being good enough, all those old messages that I've received throughout life from one experience or another. It was coming out as I started the graduate program, feeling like I wasn't good enough. It was a way of talking to myself and being able to reflect back on all of my experiences and realize that I came through a lot. I came through a lot of tough stuff and this is just another thing that I have to go through, that I can go through and excel at. (*Puts on reading glasses, reads poem*)

Struggling

It seems, at times that life is always about struggling
 Two steps forward, one step back
 Internally my own thoughts are what is befuddling
 It's me who I seem to want to attack
 Hindsight can be a painful dilemma of retrospection
 Useless waste of time, knowing I have other things to do
 Yet, I sit still allow my critic to do an inspection
 Then I realize who I need to turn things over to.
 The struggling lessens
 My thoughts are not my feelings
 I focus on the blessings
 I think of the process of healing

The hurt child who was brought through a lot of heartache
 The opportunities I was gifted that helped me to turn around
 Now, I have a decision to make
 For what was once lost is now found
 I am here for a reason and my purpose is clear
 I am worthy of God's love
 The valued friends and family's love is what I must hold dear
 For many believe in me
 So I am not struggling anymore
 The solution is in my spiritual clarity
 Look, there is another door!

YSERA: One of my textbooks actually said something terrible, "If you have a mental disorder, should you be a counselor?" And I was like, "Probably not." I literally said that and I was like, "Oh, that's a smack in the face because the person that writes the textbook works in my program." And I was like, "Mmm. I have PTSD." I'm not always feeling so wonderful, but I don't really let it get to me a lot. I deal with stuff. At night, I have nightmares and flashbacks. I have some issues but I feel like I deal with them pretty well.

When you asked for pictures or poems, I was like, "Hmm," because I don't really make my own art but I have my whole PDF of poetry. It's pretty dark and rough stuff because some of it is kind of old. It would help you more hopefully, maybe. That's not anything recent so I'm not depressed and scary right now, but I have some of my old stuff that really is mostly about trauma issues. I thought it might help.

organ donor

when i turned sixteen my license didn't have the mark of an organ donor
 back then, i saw my organs as one of the few things left as everything was getting worse
 they kept me warm at night
 i was selfish

during the five years i had to think about it, i wanted to give them away so bad
 the path to my uterus had been marred by you, and my brain stewed in your callous
 remarks
 i would do anything to change my status
 i was selfish

when i turned twenty-one my license proudly displayed the mark
 my organs mean something now
 my heart can give love as fierce as a dam bursting, and my lungs breathe in pure air
 no longer selfish

when i move on
 and all i can offer that is that which is tangible
 i hope that you- whoever you are
 will take my organs, paint the night with them, kiss the trees, and love just like me

MATTHEW: I think that maybe this speaks to it but when I started to do my internship I ended up at the military trauma clinic in this city. I was a little nervous about that because I'm not a veteran and I'm going to be honest, there is some culture homophobia that is present in the military. So again, it's another one of those negotiations, do I wear my wedding ring? How do I walk? What am I doing? How do I present myself? There are some things that I'm not... I'm too tired to change, I'm 30 years old. So I'm not going to like deepen my voice or start saying dude a lot more than I do, or use my hands less or whatever I think might help. But I do sort of go back to my skills, and I say all I can do is be here and be open and warm and this person is going to come in and set my dials, and then again the counseling session is going to be one those negotiations.

ROSE: So, I do have something that felt like discrimination since the last time we talked. My qualitative research class instructor, she was using a lot of God-based readings for this to express phenomenology. I felt like that was very one-sided and I would have appreciated more accounts of maybe people that did not, maybe from an atheist point of view, like what would this be? What would this look like? We were doing a unit on Eros and love in one class. She said direct quote

CAST MEMBER: Orgasming is like fucking God.

ROSE: Direct quote, I swear. So then I was like, well, what if people are offended by that? Maybe some people are very Christian or very Catholic and they see that as a blasphemous thing to say, which I could certainly see.

Then I said, "Well, it's interesting that you bring that up, because in the Buddhist tradition, there are three times that you feel closest to God, and that's during death, enlightenment, and orgasm." She turns to me and said:

CAST MEMBER: You know, Rose, I'm not gonna go down the Buddhist road with you right now. If you wanna take my spirituality class, it's available.

ROSE: I thought that I was really shut down by that, and that was the most powerful moment of that for me. I shut down actually. I stopped participating as much. In some way, it was just if my voice is not allowed to be heard, then I might as well not speak at all. Who said this to me the first time? Somebody in college said to me, "High school faculty love their subjects." No, "Elementary school teachers love their students. High School teachers love their subjects. College professors love themselves." Have you ever heard of that? Yeah, and it's true. There is definitely a lot of ego, but not with everybody. Everybody else has been really wonderful. But you get those select few that are just, why are you here? What is it within you that needs you to be defensive about being here?

BETH: I feel like sometimes I feel lonely. I feel like I'm misunderstood, I feel like people don't get it but yet I don't feel like I can be vulnerable with certain people and share my experience of my beliefs and why that's important to me, why I value it, how I see it or look at it. Then I go to church and there are people that have some of those negative things that everyone's talking about and I try to be the person to... I feel like I

have to be the person to stand up for people outside the church. At church when stuff comes up from people when talking about this or that. People who drink or people who smoke or people who swear or whatever it is. It's like we all have our stuff so I'm defending people at church and I feel isolated at church sometimes and then I would go to my practicum or school and feel like I'm now defending my religious faith and who I am in those contexts. And I felt alone like I don't fit anywhere. And I can be okay with allowing other people to make their own choices and loving them and respecting them as long as they can love and respect me for my choices too. And even if they don't, sometimes I'm going to love them anyway.

OLIVIA: Definitely when the LGBT Community is brought up, it's more like I wake up. If I'm getting tired in class, I'm like, "Oh, we're talking about LGBT things." So I definitely pay more attention. I'm more in-tuned. It definitely like... I don't know how... My body language changes. I'm thinking a lot more than I usually am, especially because there's this feeling too of when I speak as a gay woman, I'm speaking for every gay person out there, even though it shouldn't be that way, but unfortunately that's how it comes across. It's like:

CAST MEMBER: Well, I had a gay classmate who said this. So therefore, it applies to all gay people.

OLIVIA: So that's a lot of pressure. I need to present myself in a way that is responsible and makes the community look good. Because if I say something that's unintelligent or not politically correct or not up to date, that's a reflection not only on me but on the community. So that's also hard too. So my body language will change.

Then you have to play this game of, "Okay. Do you speak up now? Do you not speak up? And how much do you say?" Because you don't want people just to tune you out because you're saying all these great things about the community, and they're just like:

CAST MEMBER: Oh, I'm never going to get it.

OLIVIA: You have to know how far you can push the conversation. I think that kind of gives a good picture of the way that you address the situation in a class and the things that go through your mind and stuff like that.

MARY: I do agree that part of it is a little bit of feeling lonely. It's a different kind of lonely where you are in a room full of people that you see on a weekly basis, even a couple few times a week, but somehow you're sitting next to 25 other individuals but you feel that loneliness of not being able to reach out to them or them not responding to you reaching out to them.

Scene II: Coping

BETH: This is what I try to remember when I am feeling different from others, lonely in my circumstances, or isolated in some way. *(Takes out paper, begins to read)*

Unity in Diversity by: Elder John K. Carmack, March 1991

We each need to assign ourselves as a “committee of one” to create the attitudes of inclusion, acceptance, and unity wherever we find ourselves. It needs to be a high priority with us. We especially need leaders to show the way by precept and example. Each of us should be fair to everyone, especially the victims of discrimination, isolation, and exclusion. Let us be careful not to snicker at jokes that demean and belittle others because of religious, cultural, racial, national, or gender differences. All are alike unto God. We should walk away or face up to the problem when confronted with these common and unworthy practices. Each should do his or her part.

MAE: I actually found a client who was atheist, also. And I really connected with him and he really made me think about what the higher power was and how that would impact someone who's going through an AA program who doesn't believe in God. How their beliefs might prevent them from moving on. I connected with him on that level. And no one else could. My supervisor doesn't understand it. It was basically just me. And I've since been his individual counselor because of the fact that I related so well with him.

And, I went above and out of my way for him, a little bit. I started reading this book called, *Waiting: A Nonbeliever's Higher Power*. And I got quotes from that and I wrote them all down because he's been really struggling with the fourth step. And so, I'm going to give him that when he comes in. And I found that really interesting that just that tiny little bit, even though we have nothing else in common, but that tiny little thing about being a minority and believing in science rather than faith kind of connected us. So, that was cool. That was really cool.

GEE: I don't have an African American role model to go to and say, "Hey I'm struggling with..." you know baggage. I don't have a professor I can go to that I feel would understand. When I write, I still write kind of like how I talk, I say *is* instead of *are*. I had a professor that is really kind of hard, in a good way. He doesn't accept less than his standards. He seems vested in helping me to improve and to learn and to apply what I am learning. I'm supposed to meet with him in about 15 days and he wants to sit down and talk with me about different things that I can do better and help me focus and so forth. I guess it was from my final paper that I wrote and his critique of my final paper. I would imagine that he has encountered many people like myself and sees potential possibly. That's what I take out of it. At first, I had a lot of fear and I'm thinking of those old messages playing in my head. And you know, and part of it is it ties into the authenticity. It's like part of me is afraid that I'll start talking differently. And become a different person because I need to speak properly, you know, which is just kind of silly but it's fear based. But I'm looking at it positively now. He is vested in helping people that is why he is doing what he is doing. I am just going to go into that meeting with an open mind.

OLIVIA: Even though I am comfortable with myself, you still have that little bit of an adrenaline rush right before you actually come out to people, especially like that time with the professor when I vocalized my opinion about traditional marriage and religious people. My heart was definitely like, "[noise]," because I'm in front of the whole class. Literally, I'm in front of the whole class because I sit in the front of the room, and metaphorically in front of the whole class.

So that's definitely something that I don't think will ever go away, regardless, in school or just in life. You're always going to have that little bit of an adrenaline rush right before you come out to someone. And like I said, because I am androgynous, most people usually jump to conclusions that I am a lesbian, just based off of the way I dress and how I present myself and those types of things.

But when I actually have to vocalize it, that's definitely a little bit of a wake-up. It's like, "Okay. I'm going to say this." You don't know how someone's going to react. Most of the time, it's positive, but the times when it's negative, that kind of sticks with you a little bit more, unfortunately. So, you do kind of do a little bit of pep talk inside, and you get a little bit of an adrenaline rush... and then you do it. You come out.

MATTHEW: It is sort comforting to know other people who feel like they're the other and the room are debating like, "When do I say anything at all?" and two, "How do I even say it so I don't sound like the voice on the mountain?" Sometimes, I wonder, "Do other student have this issue." In some ways, it's interesting. I wonder if they perceived their statements as me as an individual feel this way. But then when I speak, am I talking for men, am I talking for gay guys, am I talking for people of color? You almost want to ask, "Who do you think I'm speaking for right now?"

MARY: I've noticed a couple very, very, very, very subtle changes with my classmates, maybe two in particular that say hi now every time I come into the classroom, which I found odd, but I think it's because I helped her. I told her that one of the books for the class that's pretty expensive is online for free in the library. I think she appreciated that, so now she's like hi every time I walk in. I'm like me? That one subtle change. I did a presentation and people said oh, good job Mary, and I'm like thank you. So, it's been a few instances like that. I'm like hmm, I'm not sure how to handle this. [laughs] It's been nice.

I'm kind of resigned to the fact that I might not make these friendships and great relationships with people, but I'm okay with it. I'm comfortable with who I am. I have great relationships outside of that program, and it's not something new, these feelings. It's something that I can cope with that's not making me depressed. I think in the beginning it was so new and I was like so hopeful, like oh, graduate program. I was like make these great connections and kind of stay in touch with these people after my program and it's going to be great. Now that it's been almost a year, I'm finishing my first year, and I reflect more about it, it's like I'm okay with it. If it continues like this, it's not very fun but I do what I have to do.

MAE: (*Reads from a piece of paper*)

Waiting: A Non-Believer's Higher Power By: Marya Hornbacher

Call it the feeling of love that connects us. Call it the creative force that drives us to transform. Call it our energy. Call it our capacity to give. Call it grace, or even divinity, something that allows for those things to exist within us as individuals and between us each time we connect. Call it the forces of good and evil, love and hatred, creative and destructive energy, wonder and awe, pain and suffering – while I contain all of these

things, while all humans do, their cumulative force in the larger world is more powerful than I am myself. We are not asked to understand this power, we are only asked to believe that we can be healed by these myriad forces that surround us and that we possess.

(Soundtrack from Contact plays. Rose speaks over it, listening, the sound silences as she ends first paragraph)

ROSE: For the first time, I felt lonely in my program. Did you ever see the movie Contact? I remember the opening scene when that movie came out, how loud our planet is and how you had to get so far. Then it started with the television and then it panned out further and further and further into the atmosphere. And then further and further and further into the Satellite field and then past that into... between the Earth and the Moon and then past that and it took so long. It took... if we were to have taken a ship from Earth to past Pluto, that's how long it would have taken for the sound to just abate. Even then you could still hear broadcast from the 30s... That really made me think how loud everything is and how can you possibly think when there's so much noise all the time. There really is so much noise.

I feel like that ties into self-care where there is just so much sound, and there's not enough quiet... Since the last time we talked, my husband and I went into the desert. I love the desert. It was so refreshing for me to be able to open a door and there was nothing. It was just the stars and there was a meteor shower and the coyotes howling and everything was so beautifully nothing. I mean, it was vivid and real, but it was empty of extraneous concerns.

It was like, it made me so present. And at first, I felt this fear like, "Well, where is my noise? Where is it?" And then I realized, but this is my heart. This is my home. This is everything and how can I feel alone when I am here? And I didn't.

AMY: We went to have drinks after our last class like everybody got together at a restaurant down the street. So one of the girls that I'm a little bit closer to, she was like, "Oh, I've got my weave in today." And all the other girls were excited. I looked at her and I was like, "I just don't understand." This is something a little bit like lighthearted but I still don't know anything about it and these are my cohorts. Then, they were explaining some things to me and then one of the other girls that I'm not as close to but she's going to be in my graduating class and everything, she looked at me and she was like:

CAST MEMBER: You know what? I really appreciate it that you just admitted that and asked how it works. Even though it's something so simple like we think. There's this Caucasian woman I work with and she came up to me, touched my hair and came into my personal space. And instead you just asked and said, "I don't know what you're talking about" instead of like invading my space.

AMY: So that helps me realize that even though it's different I can just ask. I can just be frank. I don't know if that's as easy for other people to do or feel comfortable with. But by taking one little step like that I'm like, "Okay, so I could go a little bit further," or you

know. And I think that also helps them to realize that I'm just curious. I don't know. I'm just curious and, you know, it's just different for me.

DAVE: But yeah, I guess I never realized I was really nervous going into a Master's program, at my abilities in a classroom and just writing papers in general. Yeah, I had always been okay at writing. You know, talking. Whatever. I could talk in front of some people. That's fine. But surprised, yeah. A little bit. Because I just got put on scholarship and getting really good grades. I've only gotten one B so far, I think. I was surprised at that.

As far as classroom accommodations and the curriculum and the academic experience, they've been awesome, really, really good. Was I worried about it? Learning what resources were there and how to use them. I had no idea working with SDS services for the school part of it how the class attendant type stuff is going to go, didn't know. It ended up being a lot simpler than I thought. You take into consideration, like I said, adaptability.

YSERA: (*Ysera is the first person to begin to speak with/to the other characters*) It felt nice to know that even though we're all across America, I guess, that we share a common thing. Maybe that's how all of us feel even if we're not minorities, like everyone probably feels like, you know, where is my place in this? But there is a place for everyone. And it's nice to see that. And that you can kind of get through it by just giving it a chance and expressing yourself and just being... I think being authentic is really important. Just being upfront. Because I know how much it hurts to just hide and hide. And I know sometimes it is necessary. I think you just feel much better if you just like, you put it out there. And then they can accept you or not. But really, it's not your responsibility if they like you or not. You just have to keep going. Because I'm learning that the program is tough. It's not what I thought it would be. But I'm kind of glad that it isn't what I thought. It challenges you to really get out of your comfort zone and be vulnerable. That's what I've been. Now I'm just taking risks left and right. It's like, you know, answer this question in class. And I'm not questioning if what I have to say is worth it or not. You know, it's just like, here I am.

Scene III: Wisdom

(*Characters are in a line, speaking directly to the audience*)

ROSE: The individuals that identify with minority groups - I think really the best thing they can do is work on being resilient, because like I said, there is going to be people everywhere that are going to be horrible, and people that are going to say things, and people that are going to do things. I guess I would say, the first thought that comes to mind is I want to pump them up and get them like, "Yeah, you can do it. Don't worry about it. You're worthy. You can do it. You're smart. You're good enough. You're smart enough. People like you!"

OLIVIA: My advice would be to love and accept yourself, as hard as that is, but you're not going to get love and acceptance from anyone else until you love and accept yourself.

MATTHEW: If you feel like you are the other, you are the other, there are going to be opportunities that come from that if not for your entire class then at least for yourself. I have taken the time to reframe it as, I'm learning a lot about White women. That's another thing that I've got going for me from going through the program. I think that it's been okay, I would encourage them to always fill out the feedback form and mention that there's a lack of diversity in their class.

MARY: I would say make an effort to get to know your classmates. They're all going to be great contacts later on in the future, even if it's a little bit hard, try to reach out to people. Talk, mingle, attend the events as much as you can, reach out to your professors if you see something's not working out. Reach out for help, because even if you don't think it's going to help, there might be someone else, your professor can connect you with someone else that can give you advice that you didn't think about before.

MAE: reach out to people, whether it's through the internet or through some kind of group of people that you have something in common with.

DAVE: I'd probably try to empower the shit out of them. [laughs] You know, that's kind of my go-to and that's, I'm a big one on where there's a will, there's a way. Encouragement, empowerment, and resources. I'm a big one on tapping into resources and advocating.

BETH: I would say and I've thought about this before. I would say we all have reasons why we are different. But we are so focused sometimes on our differences or the thing that makes us different and how we don't fit that it keeps us from being open to other people. Value the differences that you have because you have a different perspective to offer people and be willing to be understanding of other people's differences too.

AMY: I would say just be, and I should take my own advice probably, but just being confident in who you are. Like everybody's there to learn from each other and you don't have to be like everybody else. That's what makes for a better learning experience. You know you should appreciate the fact that you're different and embrace it. Because I mean it causes for a lot of conversations if you're willing to be in them and a lot of debates and room for growth.

GEE: One of the things that I would tell them is to surround themselves with strong peer support. To get a network and start now to build a network that you can use in the future.

YSERA: I don't know you... but who you are is so special and other people can't understand that now, but in the future they will. And whoever you choose to counsel they will see that in you, that you do have skills, and just because you might be from a different part of life, or there is something different about you, you have been through a lot, so you do have the wisdom and the knowledge and you've fought through so much that if you could just... you get your degree and then you help others.

End of Play

Implications

There are major implications within the utilization of the ethnodrama script. First and foremost, ethnodrama has not been used within counselor education. The creation of this play opens an entirely new way for counselors and counselor educators to engage in arts-based qualitative research. Secondly, this play allows readers and audiences a new way in which to interact with research participants. Instead of simply reading excerpts of the participants' stories that coincide with each theme, consumers will have an opportunity to create emotional connections with written characters or actors on stage. Counselor educators may gain a better understanding of the needs of their students. Other minority master's students may begin to feel less lonely within their own programs. The next step in continuing the momentum of this research is to use this play within a multicultural or diversity counseling class and research the impact of the play on students. Clearly, there may be various implications resultant in the creation of this ethnodrama script.

Conclusion

Utilizing the research method of ethnodrama in conjunction with Hermeneutic phenomenology yielded a unique way in which to interact with the experiences of the participants in this study. By analyzing over thirty interviews, direct participant quotes were selected to tell the story of minority counseling master's students. Counselor educators and counseling master's students may use the ethnodrama script to gain a better understanding of the needs, lived experiences, and complexities of self-identified

minority students. The ethnodrama script and phenomenological findings created a synergistic opportunity for reflection and portrayal of the lived experiences of the ten participants. Ethnodrama may be a future consideration for researchers within the field of counselor education.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Letter

Research Invitation to be Forwarded to Master's Counseling Students:

Dear Master's Counseling Student,

Hello. I hope you are well. I would like to have your perspective represented in a study I am conducting. Understanding master's students' experiences helps programs and faculty ensure that they are best meeting the needs of their students. I want to ensure the highest level of confidentiality, which is why I chose to use a sampling method that is not directly tied to contacting you individually by name.

The purpose of this study is to gather information on the experiences of self-identified minority students within master's level counselor training programs. Your self-identification of 'minority' can mean a multitude of things. For example, you may be an ethnic, racial, or sexual minority within your program. Or you may identify as a minority because you are the only person of your own cultural, societal, or value belief systems within your program. I am specifically looking for people who feel as though their identity status has effected their experience within their master's program. I want to hear from anybody who identifies as "other" or "different." This study will culminate in a theatrical script of the experiences of participants. Participants must identify as different from their colleagues and/or a minority within in their master's program. If you choose to participate in this study, there will be three rounds of interviews. The first and second interviews will take about 30-60 minutes. The final interview will be to check my data with your experience and should take about 10-30 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Choosing to participate or declining to participate in this study will NOT impact your grades or standing as a master's student. You may withdraw at anytime. You may refuse or discontinue participation at any time without consequence or prejudice. Although there is minimal risk associated with participating in the study, there is a possibility that participants will feel uncomfortable engaging in this study. If your participation in my research has caused you to feel uncomfortable in any way, or if my research prompted you to consider personal matters about which you are concerned, I encourage you to contact a local mental health agency.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you so much for your participation in this study. **If you are interested in participating, please review the informed consent and answer the attached questionnaire and then contact Kirsten at lamakirs@isu.edu.** If you would like to know the results of this study, please contact Kirsten lamakirs@isu.edu or Dr. Feit at feitstep@isu.edu.

Sincerely,

Kirsten LaMantia

APPENDIX B

Participant Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Current Counseling Master's Students

- 1.) Please write about how or why you identify as a minority, different, or “other” than the students and/or faculty within your master’s counseling program.

- 2.) Please describe your cultural identity.

- 3.) Consent to at least two interviews and one member-check and your story to be represented in a theatrical script (all identifying information will be edited).
- 4.) Please fill out, sign, and scan the informed consent and email it back to me.

APPENDIX C

First Round Interview Questions

- 1.) How do you identify as a minority?
- 2.) What is your experience as a minority student in your master's program?
- 3.) What critical incidents have occurred during your master's program due to those facets of your identity?
- 4.) Where and from whom have you derived support within your program?
- 5.) Why did you choose to become a counselor?
- 6.) What would you tell other students who are a minority in their program?
- 7.) How do you relate to the word minority?

APPENDIX D

First Member Check Information Regarding First Round Themes

Past Trauma/ Lived Experiences as Minority

Effect in class/Program

“I do suffer from PTSD and sometimes that causes issues within the program, what's in my life because people don't understand how can you be a counselor when you have this, and I find that hurtful. I have been dealing with this since I was 16, I make strides everyday and you are telling me you can be better than me just because I have something going on. I'm like, I don't see how it has effected me in the program yet?” Ysera

“Does the very presence of somebody who ‘I assume that you're marginalized, I see that you're a person of color, or a person of size, or person of disability or what not’. Does that change how I teach? Does that change the narratives that I offer up in the classroom? Would those narratives ever have happened if you hadn't been in the classroom?” Matthew

“I kind of felt really betrayed and it really hurt my trust in other people so I don't really talk to anyone in my program here. I kind of try to stay away, actually, and not make friends, just because I'm afraid that if I reveal something to them they're going to go and tell on me or something. I don't know. I know it's irrational but because it happened before and... I don't know.” Mae

“I think stuff comes up for people in the program. That same thing kind of happens but it's not as prepared for and even people in class who are learning about stuff from an academic standpoint, and then you have somebody who has a real life experience that they've been through, people aren't always sensitive to that.” Beth

“...because I told my girlfriend that I kind of sometimes wish I was a fly on the wall. So I could be in the room and see what people are saying, but not be there. So people didn't feel like they had to hold back maybe some things, like, ‘Oh, I know there's a gay person in the room. So I'm not going to say this.’ ...It's not necessarily that I've seen people trying to say things, and then they're holding back. It's more of just like you kind of know, being a part of the oppressed group, that the more dominant group is a little more uncomfortable with you.” Olivia

Personal Counseling/ Experience with a Counselor

“And she was like, ‘Can you just stop? Can you get over it?’ and I was like, ‘Whoa, really? Okay, and you're being paid to say this?’ I was so taken aback by her bluntness and how mean she sounded and it really destroyed me at first, but then I reflected on it.

I'm going, 'Yeah, why don't I just get over it? What is preventing me from getting over it? Why can't I just be in the present moment?' That was a huge turning point for me as a person and I'm going, 'Instead of being selfish and going me, me, me, it's all about me, it's all about my experience, how can I not be like the people that I hated in elementary school and junior high? How can I be the person that I want to be and help other people to not be in pain, not be in psychological pain with the knowledge that I know?'" Rose

"I went to counseling. I went to... that was the first time I told anybody about the abuse. My counselor. She was LDS and she helped me at times to see a lot of the way that I was doing things was necessarily how I really wanted to do things like taking everything at face value that I was told to do religiously and then doing it and thinking that I have to be perfect." Beth

Reason for Becoming a Counselor in Training

"But the other thing, and I share this with people in recovery more so, one of the things that I invested to do is to be able to stop people from dying like my brother did. The story goes that he died on the streets of Baltimore City, Maryland. We still don't know where he's buried at, and we didn't find out that he was dead until 2010 and supposedly he died in 2001... So I feel like it's a spiritual journey that led me to counseling, and something inside of me that, the little kid that never knew what he wanted to be when he grew up, found a purpose. Supposedly, not supposedly, I'm good at it. I enjoy it, I embrace it. I work full time as a counselor in a treatment center here and I'm making a difference, and that fills me." Gee

"So I'm glad to be where I am today and it definitely led me to this profession, to my special interest, to who I want to treat. I wish it never happened but it has led me to some great things." Ysera

"There was this one girl that she got accepted to class of her choice. I prepped her, I helped her. She went there almost, not completely full, right? I'm like, 'Yeah, this will be good.' I really love the relationship with students, I love being around them. I'm usually, I'm more of an introvert, so I get my energy from being away from people but somehow being with students kind of excites me. And especially with underprivileged students, it makes me want to get up out of bed every morning and I love sleeping. They're a big motivation." Mary

"Realizing that the advocacy that I was doing... was all really actually a part of counseling and that was really...It wasn't that you go sit on a couch and tell me your problems, and tell me your life story. There was really something more to that, and I think that really appealed to me." Matthew

“I had an eating disorder in high school and I went to therapy and it helped. So I just decided that that would be interesting. Then I started reading *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey, and it was about addiction. I know it's not a true story but they said it was a memoir at the time, and it just kind of really introduced me to the field of addiction. Then I started reading memoirs about addiction and I just really fell in love with it. My dad is a hoarder so that kind of tied in too. I guess that's the reason. The main reason was because I went to therapy when I was a teenager.” Mae

“Church gave me a lot of those opportunities to connect with people. So I just connected with people in all these different like settings and environments but I didn't really have the skills to help them. I don't know what the right thing to say is when someone is going through something. I don't know what's helpful, what's not helpful. So I always was like if I had counseling skills one, I could be a better teacher. I could be a better coach. I could be a better person. I could help people in their church callings.” Beth

“I wrote a whole paper on why I went into counseling, and I think a part of it is the whole learning to accept yourself for who you are. Being a gay person, it wasn't always easy to be so open and accepting of who I was.... I couldn't accept that I liked masculine things until I accepted myself as a gay woman, and then I realized I wasn't alone. There were other butch androgynous lesbians out there, and this wasn't just a weird thing I do. But I think that kind of fueled me going into counseling because I learned how to accept myself and get to a healthy happy place I kind of want to do the same for others, especially in the LGBT community.” Olivia

“My sister had been in treatment facilities before, she's been to three different ones for eating disorders and so just talking with her and experiencing that and she was more talking me into it. She was like you'd be really good at that and then so I thought about being a counselor at a high school.” Amy

“At the time, I had no movement. I didn't have any movement in my arms at all for nine months. So that's kind of what I prepared for. They set me up with sip and puff. I'm still working in the, I'm still trying to get away from it and move to a joystick, but I'm just being stubborn. They set me up with the sip and puff, and I learned it in less than five minutes. And I turned around and they set this other guy up with the sip and puff too. He was struggling with it a little bit, and I was able to put it in terms for him really easily. And within a half hour, he was picking nit up. Just that helping factor. Other people with disabilities like me, I liked it. And counseling's helping like that too. I just kind of researched it a little bit.” Dave

Support and Validation

Lack of and Seeking others Like Self

“...but I think that these things about me that are very different and unique that some other people in my program don't have. Because there's no one in that program that identifies all me. It has no trans people...” Ysera

“And I don't know, like sometimes I'm usually okay about getting to know other people, talking to people, but I don't know, I just feel like I disconnect from my classmates, like everyone has these groups of friends, they stick with each other, but for some reason I haven't been able to make those connections with friends.” Mary

“I just am actually more comfortable around other atheists. I know that sounds like... I don't know if that sounds bad but like my therapist, when I found out that she was an atheist too, it was like a huge relief because I could actually talk openly with her. It felt like I could be more open and more real and more true to myself without setting up these defense mechanisms.” Mae

“Typically when I go into class, the first thing I do is I try to see if there's any other gay people. I know that's like... How can you see someone's sexual orientation? Well, you can't. So there's that. Of course, people in the community think they have gaydar, and I am one of those people that think that. So I will unfortunately stereotype and look and stuff, or just the obvious, if their gender expression is different from the typical masculine/feminine roles. Typically I don't find anyone, or I find one person or two people. So then it's kind of like, ‘Oh, there's my ally,’ just sitting there in class...” Olivia

“And that's part of kind of my exploration as a student counselor is realizing not everybody's going to be like me. And I think I had somewhat of an image of that for some reason.” Dave

Self/ Spirituality/ Coping Skills

“So that's the other reason why finding my place here in something I enjoy, counseling, is another spiritual thing for me. Because it's like I found my purpose.” Gee

“Every day there is something that happens on a spiritual level that tells me - in a personal level - that tells me, ‘This is it. This is exactly where I need to be, how I need to be doing it.’ If you look at the Jesuit ideals of [university] and you think about well, how does that permeate the mission? How does that permeate how the teachers approach instruction? Where does that come from in the people that I'm in my cohort with? All of that enriches my experience even if it's not on the same quality or capacity, maybe - I'm looking for the right word - but it's still there. It's always there and I know it's there and it's not - I guess it would be like if you knew that, I guess, your God would be always there, like, ‘Yeah, God is always there.’ Spirituality is always there.” Rose

“I was probably depressed a lot growing up after some of those experiences but I would pray for comfort or relief or to get through that situation and I would get it.” Beth

“I think the more you're out and the more you're accepting of yourself, there is going to be more of a backlash, but you get used to it. I know that's kind of sad to say. But in a way, you get used to the discrimination, and you get better at handling it and knowing, ‘Okay. This person doesn't like me because I'm gay. Too bad for them because I'm a cool person.’” Olivia

Faculty, Supervisors, Internship, Program(positive and not)

“No, but I mean my adviser and my other professors are really great. I know that if I really wanted to I could go and talk to them. At the same time I'm like, I mean, what else can they really do and what else can they really tell me?” Mary

“So there was a culture of addressing that I felt like sort of open. And I saw that a lot in the orientation class and ethics in my second semester I think, a lot of conversation about the professional identity is connected to all people and that we are supposed to be able to connect to all people and respect them and that was kind of nice.” Matthew

“Through doing my new practicum here, and everything looks fine, and I had religious clients and it was perfectly all right. I even suggested that they should go to church if they were religious, like “Go back to church. Maybe that will make you feel happier,” and it did. My confidence has built up in myself because I know I can do it and what they said was wrong about me. Just because you're atheist doesn't mean that you don't understand the value of religion.” Mae

“So overall, he's pretty open about his opinions about things in class, and he's a pretty liberal person. So I knew he was a safe ally, as well as my other two professors. They both were very out and open about their acceptance of the LBGT community.” Olivia

“I mean, they're really good at it. I mean, they're just smart. They've been at it a long time. But they do, they want to know that perspective in class, and it makes me feel good. That I can offer that. And they thank me for that.” Dave

Cohort/ Peers (positive and not)

“But I still feel the difference with my classmates. I can make friends on the surface, but not many people can be a close friend, if you know what I mean. It's, like, because I don't hang out with people that go to bars and stuff like that, so I'm still that same way.” Gee

“It's good to have someone to keep up with. So we kind of just stick together now. And then sometimes I think about it and I'm like ... well I mean chances are ... I mean you have to stick with somebody, but I don't know the Asian American and the White person

stuck together. I think it's just really by chance like our personalities matched better and circumstance. We were both in the interview group and then sat together the first class and then kept going." Amy

"But they're all great people. Treated me just like anybody else. They come up, I live about 30 minutes away so I'm commuting down there. It's saved me a lot of money... But yeah, they come down here every once in a while. We go out to the movies and stuff because I've made friends..." Dave

Congruence/ Coming Out/ Being Open

Choosing to Speak or Remain Silent in Class

Because I was saying, "Look, if there's something I said in the past, if you don't want me here, just let me know and I'll leave. I don't have to come back," and I was saying, "I can come to class and I can sit down and still learn what I'm supposed to learn, but I don't need to participate and stuff." Gee

"So I feel like when I want to be more vocal I tend to shy away from it just because I don't feel that support and it's like when I do I just kind of feel like the odd person in class, like I stick out too much and not necessarily always in the best way, in a positive way." Mary

"Why am I not more open? I don't know. I guess that you just kind of get jilted so you don't want it to happen again. I don't know. Like I said, I know it's irrational. It is. So I don't know." Mae

"I felt like she wanted to battle people... That kind of environment is not any environment for either side to understand each other. I didn't say anything in that situation. When I went down to [internship site]... we talked about religion and sexuality. That was an environment where I felt more like I can stand up and say something because I felt safer in that environment... So there are certain people that I feel safe to talk to about that but it's in way smaller groups. I wouldn't talk about that in bigger groups with people." Beth

"How often do you speak up in class about the issues that we're talking about? And how often do you stay back because you know you already know this stuff about the community? I want other people to feel like they can add the conversation. I don't want to dominate the conversation, just because I'm a part of the community, and obviously I have an array of knowledge about the community. It's always a little hard to walk that line. How often do you speak up? And when do you stay back so other people have a chance to speak up?" Olivia

"I guess just for a while it was kind of awkward because I didn't know how to act or how to react to things. Like I was just kind of quiet. Like I'm not going to start controversy over what I think about some racial aspects on some topic. Not that I'm all alone, but it

would be 26 people to 1 that's what it feels like. But then I'm realizing a lot of people don't even think that way and they don't all have the same opinions so I think a lot of it is brought on by myself or was in the beginning.” Amy

“But yeah, when people talk to me, I'm usually really open about it... But I don't know, at least in my experience, after your second day in the hospital, you're usually pretty open because they're tossing you around and everybody's seeing things they shouldn't see and there's no privacy... So you either reject that or you say, ‘Uh-hum. Hi, guys!’” Dave

Intentional Self-Disclosure

“We had a conversation for two or three days before the [interview] and he was like, ‘Are you going to tell them why you came down here because there's only one reason why you came down here?’ and ‘So, how are you going to word that, what is it going to look like?’ and at that point I was like, ‘I'm just going to say it because I mean because that's going to be how it's going to be’. And so even in my interview they said ‘Oh you're from [another state], what brought you [here]?’” I flat out said, my partner moved and he's working at a hospital here, and so I followed him and they took it very well.” Matthew

“I find I'm not necessarily ridiculed but I find that I have to be careful about how much I self-disclose in class, so I'm not like, ‘Yeah, when I was a kid...’ but it's more like I talk about my feelings a lot because in a way, that's my way of connecting with people and there is a time and a place for that, and the classroom isn't always the time and place. That's something that I'm learning to be very mindful of and be very careful of.” Rose

“I'm very open. I never hide it. I always talk freely about my girlfriend and about the community and things that are going on and stuff like that. So people know that I am gay. I don't hide it, and I come out usually within the first week of class. Somehow I find a way, not on purpose. It just happens. So people know, in class, that I am a gay woman. It's not like I drop the bomb on them just because we brought up LGBT issues. They usually know before that... A lot of times, people can tell, again, because I'm androgynous. They just look at me, and they know. So sometimes I don't even have to verbalize coming out. I just am coming out by the way I dress and I present myself a lot of times.” Olivia

Awareness of effect of Self on Class/ Others

“So at first I was guarded, but then in the group process, I began to open up and share about these things. Share about my brother and always comparing myself to my brother and so forth. Because of that, that helped other people to open up, too.” Gee

Fear of Rejection

“So now when I interviewed and then I got accepted even during the interview session I still wasn't... I was still with the “she” pronoun even though I didn't like it. I was... I

don't know, you are kind of scared. You are like what if I tell this interviewer, this professor who I'm going to have. I was like, "My pronounce are these." And they're like, "I don't know you're talking about," which I hope they won't say but I don't know everybody that's teaching so how will I know how they will react." Ysera

"With some instructors, they don't provide a environment where I feel like I'm at liberty to open up that much, so I do have to be careful. In other classes, like my spirituality class, or I know crisis, trauma and loss which I had not taken yet - those types of classes where you're actually working through a lot of your own triggers in class and you're doing reflective papers and you're doing personal exploration - in that sort of sense, I feel that I'm much more able to open and self-disclose and go, 'Here is what it was like for me and this is why I am the way I am.'" Rose

Critical Incident/ Defining Moment

Affirming/ Confirming Experience

"We talk about mind and body in counseling, too. We talk about the connection between mind and body, okay. Well, there are monks in Tibet that to go into the Himalayas that go in nothing but their robes, and they burn at 108 degrees and they don't die and they keep themselves warm and it's all in the head. So I'm going, 'Okay...' I had an instructor that had a lung problem and she was doing mind and body medicine with a friend of hers, and she introduced it into the class. She was able to control her breathing simply by mind over matter so to speak - so stuff like that. It's not overt. It's very subtle. It comes in when I least expect it... It's not just, 'Here is how I can justify making this decision.' It's more, 'Here is how I can enrich the decision that I've made, and here is how I know that it's perfect, because it's already there. I just have yet to notice it.' So yeah, that's it." Rose

Isolating Experience

"I started off the conversation by saying, "We're a lot alike." She's a White older lady. I'm Black, of course. And she looked at me with, I can't even describe the look. I just felt like she was looking down on me and she was like, "We're nothing alike." I was like, wow. Before she even knew what I was really trying to say. And I'm like, "I'm so sorry," and I quickly walked away. But it really hurt me deeply." Gee

"I posted on Facebook this kind of chart, like, when is it okay to use the R-word and of course all going back to, "No, it's not okay." Then this person from my program commented and said, "This chart is..." and said the word and I was like, "Oh." I tried to inform him... I was like, "That word does hurt me," and then all my friends came on that have learning disabilities and they were like, "That's never okay to say," and then he deleted it. He was, like, not taking responsibility. I sent a message and I was like, "I just wanted to say one more time." He was like, "It was meant to be ironic," and I was like, "I understand, but no," and then he deleted me and I was like, "That's going fun for you maybe we have to be partners in class sometime." Ysera

“And so, I opened up very personal to the entire class about stuff that I usually talk about with very close friends, with people that I trust. And there was a student in the classroom who I kind of felt went through the same thing, I can relate and that was the only thing. And after that no one was like, ‘You know, thanks for sharing or talking.’ I was just like, ‘Oh, okay.’” Mary

“So they took away my practicum experience and it was just like it wasn't appropriate and I felt like they were doing this because I was different. I feel like because I was questioning their religion a little bit and their right to use religion in the classroom despite being a religious university, because I did bring that up, I felt like they just used that to start something and created a bigger deal than it really was and then take away my practicum rights. Since they were going to take it away for a full year I just decided to transfer anyways. It just wasn't a good environment and it sucked.” Mae

“One example is with my supervisor at my site, she is very much like... I would say tries to be understanding of the LDS culture, is open to that, but also I felt like lots of comments that she would make were trying to let me know that my way of thinking was wrong. For example, I had a client that was gay and because maybe I'm not as familiar with that, I think that I made a comment one time in one of my notes that said she was LDS and she had said that because she chose a different lifestyle, that her family didn't accept her. I had written that in my notes and my supervisor assumed that I had made that comment like it was a choice that she was gay and I was making that assumption. And it wasn't ill intended on her part at all but I just would get undertones a lot of like, ‘I wonder when people are going to realize that this is not a choice’ and I felt like it wasn't like she was really making those comments. I think that's what she really believed but I felt like she was trying to educate me out of my religion and culture when that's already something that I feel, you know?” Beth

“So that was the first thing I thought. I kind of was embarrassed. Then I kind of got a little mad, like, ‘Okay. They don't get it, because they're feminine women.’ They're cisgender women. and they dress feminine. They're not getting it because they're not looked at by society. They're looked at for different reasons, but they're not looked at like, ‘Oh, is that a woman?’ No, when people see them, they know they're a woman... So I was kind of like, ‘You don't get it,’ and that just kind of frustrated me a little bit. There was like all these stages I went through. Then it was like understanding, like, Okay.’ They're not going to understand it. Don't get mad at them for not understanding.” Olivia

Relational Experience

“Last year we got a new batch of counseling students of course. I didn't know them from Adam because I was in different classes and we met at a meet and greet, and so I introduced myself what not and the next day one of the students came to my office and she says ‘Can I talk to you? Do you have a minute?’ I said sure and she says, ‘So, you're gay right?’ and I said, ‘Yes.’ She's like ‘that is great because we want to do a presentation for the association of LGBT issues in counseling and we have a great idea but we don't have a gay person in our group.’ And I was like ‘Okay, what's your idea?’ [...] It's so

funny that I was essentially the token gay like they wanted some legitimacy to their research by having a gay person in the group... It worked out well. But I guess in another context you might be hurt.” Matthew

“At the end of our class last week or a couple of weeks ago everybody had to write down their favorite song before we left class and for class last week our professor played the song and we had to guess everybody in the class like who picked which song. So she went through all the songs like two minutes of each song and we had to guess who picked that song. And then like advertisements would come on because she was playing Pandora and it would be like a Beach Boys song in the advertisement and everybody looks at me. Just anything that wasn't hip-hop or R&B. I got guessed for like five different songs, because they wouldn't expect a Black person to pick something that would be a White song or something like that. I was like okay. It draws a lot of unwanted attention, but now it's just I guess since I've known them over the semester it's kind of funny. Just take it as it is.” Amy

Personal Growth/ Reflection

“There came a point in the semester where I was like, man, I don't know if I can do this. Because I got thrown this really, really depressed guy. Like super depressed. And I've been there before. And you know, it's just regulating that affect. And it hits you like a ton of bricks. Sadly the professors, they pick those pretty strategically to see how we react. It's their job to judge us in a way. And yeah, I was talking with another kid in my class who's actually legally blind. He's like, he said the same thing to myself. ‘Man. I got really depressed in the middle of the semester.’ I did not know if I could do this.... It was the first two sessions, they hit us hard. And then the third session, I think they told the doctoral students to let up on us a little bit. [laughs] So it kind of naturally lifted us. But no, learning the skills by doing them is so much different than reading a theory book.” Dave

Quitting/ Questioning

“...I also have this third thing that's called my critical voice. It started running in my head and said, ‘You don't belong here. You don't fit in. You shouldn't be doing this.’” Gee

“They're like, ‘Oh, you are like the T word. Oh, ha, ha, you are the R word. You're all these things,’ and when it comes together they're just like, “You are so flawed and you are so wrong. How could you get this far?”” Ysera

“It just really made me question everything that I was... I really questioned even continuing in this program and stuff like that or like even being a counselor” Mae

See Critical Incident

Responsibility

To Self

“I feel like I have to be the person to stand up for people outside the church or like, with my mom. I have to stand up and say, ‘You know you can't really be the judge, Mom, of that person. You don't know what that person's been through. You don't know what their experiences are. Only God can be the one that knows that person and he cares about them way more than you or I.’ But those are things that... Like, at church when stuff comes up and people are talking about people who drink or people who smoke or people who swear or whatever it is. And I'm like, ‘We all have our stuff.’ I'm defending people at church, so I feel isolated at church sometimes. And then I would go to my practicum or school and feel like I'm now defending my religious faith and who I am in those contexts. And I felt alone like I don't fit anywhere...” Beth

“I tell my professors I said, ‘I want you guys to hammer on me just like you hammer on anyone else.’ I said I need it... And I said, ‘You know, I really want to meet the same deadlines as everyone else in this program. I think it's good practice for what it will be like working for an agency or whatever.’” Dave

To Educating Majority

“So I'll try my best to show them that if you want to have a conversation about this you can talk to me about it... I'm just so upset and I know that the best responses don't come from snap decisions. So it comes from, like, let's get centered, let's kind of think about what are we going to say to this person and is it going to help or hinder the situation.” Ysera

To advocacy of Minority

“I feel like in almost every class, I've had to ask myself, is it my responsibility to be the representative of the minority in my class? And I always sort of challenge the class and see if anybody else is going to say anything. Like is somebody going to mention gay kids? Or is the gay guy going to mention gay kids or gay clients? And so far I'm the one who brings it up... it's a little frustrating that I have to bring it up. I think that that has been when I felt the most marginalized I guess and it's interesting because it is not harmful. I don't feel threatened. I feel disappointed I guess.” Matthew

“I think I've tried to be less like, ‘It's not your responsibility to fix everybody's perception of the LDS church,’ but I do feel like there's a lot of misconceptions about it just like people in the church have a lot of misconceptions about people who don't go to church or who drink or who are gay or who, whatever. So I always feel like it's my responsibility because I am LDS to be different or to live it in a way that feels congruent with me. But I make mistakes too. I'm sure that I'm judgmental of people over things at times so it's not like I have it down perfect or anything.” Beth

“There's constant discrimination against the LGBT community, and that's probably never going to go away, or its going to take a very long time to get to a place where it's gone.

So in the meantime, I could be like a safety net to try to help people pass through, make life little easier. So that's kind of where I came from with the LGBT, like wanting to go into counseling for LGBT individuals.” Olivia

Of Speaking as a Member of the Minority

“I don't feel like there's been micro-aggressions or anything like that. But it's more like being able to feel comfortable in speaking up like what I think as a Latina or my cultural background. I don't always feel comfortable being able to express that. I truly am for the most part but because I'm the only one, I don't want to represent an entire world or culture.” Mary

“I always want to say, ‘This is me and this is by my experience, this won't be everybody's experience but you should certainly utilize the person that you have in front of you and this is what I'll offer up.’ Sometimes you worry like I'm not the gay guru on the mountain. I'm not speaking for all Indians. You want to make sure to put that little asterisk on it.” Matthew

“My body language changes. I'm thinking a lot more than I usually am, especially because there's this feeling too of when I speak as a gay woman, I'm speaking for every gay person out there, even though it shouldn't be that way, but unfortunately that's how it comes across. Its like, ‘Well, I had a gay classmate who said this. So therefore, it applies to all gay people.’ So that's a lot of pressure. I need to present myself in a way that is responsible and makes the community look good. Because if I say something that's unintelligent or not politically correct or not up to date, that's a reflection not only on me but on the community.” Olivia

To Others

“But also another thing is that I had to realize that it's not my responsibility to help everybody. Sometimes I need not to offer. I need to wait for people to ask.” Gee

“I have been labeled an overachiever and a perfectionist so that's interesting for me. I want to strive to be the best I can be and I really appreciate it when other students come up to me and they're going, ‘Hey, do you have the answer to this question that I have?’ or, ‘I was really struggling with this. I just need an ear right now,’ and I'm like, ‘Yeah, this feels good to just be here.’” Rose

“So we have to write a lot of journal articles and reflections and it's like I'm just so appreciative to be exposed to this and I'm going to take what I can from it. And then I hope I can add something to it. Even though I'm only one person that hopefully my classmates can get something from it as well.” Amy

Relationship with Minority Status

Length of Time

"I'll start with gender identity first because it's been a long road. I just came up to my parents two weeks ago, just had a conversation with my dad but he was like, "Your mum is not really handling this well and she is being kind of weird."... It was overall good, anything where you are not being kicked out or your funding for school is taken away or you are disowned is good to me. I was like thinking about all my friends who rely on donations mostly because they are on the streets. I'm like that's not me, so it's good."

Ysera

"Nobody really ever says, 'Oh, Rose, you're in a Catholic school. Why are you Buddhist?' Nobody has ever said that. Nobody has ever been like, 'Wow, you don't believe in God? Jeez, what's wrong with you?' It's more like, 'Wow, tell me more about your experience.' Now the tables are flipped where [city] is a very heavily Buddhist-oriented community... There's a big Tibetan diaspora here. Tibetans in exile come here a lot because of the community and so I'm used to being the majority, but now that I'm at [university] and that's consuming almost all my time, the tables are turned a little bit."

Rose

"And then like when I got your email I was like oh that's not for me. And then I was like oh wait, it is actually like it's just the opposite of what I would think. Yes, this is the first time I've ever been in a situation like this." Amy

"Since my injuries, recently, are fairly new, about three and a half years out from my car accident, I've thought about this and I talked about this in our multiculturalism class a little bit how he made us do an assignment where we write down 10 things. Ten things that describe ourselves. Just one-word deals. Pretty basic deal. And I found myself going down the list and I was, he asked us after that, he's like, 'What did you write down and what did you think of it?' And I said, you know, I really attributed, I was having a really hard time differentiating and attributing my new identity as someone in a wheelchair. I found myself writing nothing but physical characteristics down. It was really interesting." Dave

Past Minority Experience

"And then going to college, I was the only... one of the few Hispanic girls in the school so a lot of times I ended up being like the one Latina student in the classroom or the one non-White student in the classroom at all for all three years. And that's where I had some of my biggest experiences [as a minority] because I was finally like in a big community where I was more the minority where I have to adapt to other people's culture, to another language and that's where I really experienced a lot of micro-aggressions and blatant racism from my peers, from my professors, from the administration." Mary

Level of Comfort with Minority Group

"...because of my education and my intelligence and my (lighter) skin color, I didn't fit in in the Black neighborhood... So I felt like I was cornered between both worlds... I felt like I wanted to break the stereotype, but then when I deal with people that are my own

color, I feel judged and so forth. So I don't feel like I fit in in either place, but I can fit in in both places because I have the mask to do that. I can turn my hat to the side and talk slick and cool and whatever when I go into a bad neighborhood. I have that ability to be that chameleon, but I also can talk intelligently in class and with owners of companies and CEOs and presidents of universities and so forth. So that's one of the things that I need to work on, finding the balance for me, and to be who I am, and not change who I am because of who I'm around.” Gee

“There are some assumptions or some preliminary planning or ideas that come with every interaction, and so I think that marginalized students are keenly aware or maybe even more so than some students of the same privilege or power of those assessments that are happening. And sort of how am I presenting and this idea of, as soon as I go into the room I know that there's going to be some evaluation, because I'm evaluating and so I assume that they evaluate to. What am I ready to show? So I think that's sort of to be expected and to be negotiated. It can be hard and it can be painful for some people. I know there are times in the past where it was and I did a lot of image monitoring or image policing of myself. See all of high school and middle school for more information.” Matthew

“My mother and my father have always been supportive of me. It wasn't easy when I first came out. I'm not going to say that. It took some time for them to adjust, but they were never like, ‘This is a sin. You're disgusting. You can't bring anyone around.’ It was never like that for me. So I think knowing that I had the love and support of my parents who... That's all any kid ever wants, is the love and support of their parents... So I think definitely knowing that I have a base to lean if, say, someone's mean to me in class, or I have a professor who's an asshole to me. I can lean on my friends and my family. I know they've got my back.” Olivia

Level of Comfort with Majority Group

“When I told my fiancé that I was doing this, he was like ‘You're not a minority,’ and I was like ‘Well, no, I'm a White female.’ I mean I guess females are minorities but I'm not a racial minority or anything like that. Atheism isn't sometimes seen as a minority by people. I don't think people really understand that we are targeted and we are judged and it's not just by Christians. It's by every single religion. Islam thinks that we are infidels and stuff like that. It is a minority and I really do feel like it is, even though some people might say it's not.” Mae

“I do identify as LDS. I was not raised around here though like a lot of people in the program are so there are things about... sometimes I feel like I get lumped into a group of people when my experiences within the religious context are different so my way of maybe expressing it or it may be even my thoughts on certain things are a little bit different even though I've been given that label” Beth

“But now I'm like, oh my gosh, is this how that one Asian in my whatever class felt. Did they feel like everybody was staring at them or you know? And another thing like

everybody knows my name. Like everybody knows who I am. Like I get on the elevator and like 'Hey Amy' and I'm like 'Hey.'" Amy

"But if you think that I have all the reasons why I'm not you know privileged, but I mean I am privileged. It's just I'm privileged just by the fact that I'm White, but my parents didn't give me everything. But I didn't go without. So I mean that's being privileged as well. I am, but for some reason I get defensive and I want to tell you all the reasons I'm not. There's no reason for it. I don't know why I don't want to be that person or in that situation. I want to be on an even playing field. I don't want to be above or below." Amy

Cultural Norms

Counseling Micro Aggressions

"I'm just saying professionalism to me seems like to have a lot of issues because it means you can afford *these* clothes and you can look *this* way and everyone will look the same." Ysera

"...the faculty sort of say off hand to connect the students like 'You understand, remember that time we used to pick on the girls because you liked them?' and you're like 'No'." Matthew

"So marriage is one thing that might come up. There's marriage counseling. But does that really include LGBT individuals? Because not every state has marriage equality yet. So they use the word "marriage," but for a gay couple, they might not legally be married, but they're committed to each other. So do you consider that a married couple? Who's coming to marriage counseling? [...] Pretty much in all of my classes, when they refer to marriage, they're referring to a man and a woman, I've noticed, which is also really unfortunate because there are states now that have gotten marriage equality for same-sex couples. So it's no longer limited to one man, one woman. They could be two women and two men." Olivia

Counseling Norms vs Cultural Norms

"I'm like, 'Well, what am I going to tell you, what can you tell me to like make this better?' Not that she wouldn't be able to understand. I just don't need more pressure from her telling me, 'Well, you should do this. You should do that.' I just don't want more pressure. Especially my parents are being supportive, unconditionally about grad school about work, about anything that I want or that I need." Mary

"It was tough because it's a lot of challenging yourself to be interpersonal and challenge yourself to be reflective and empathetic and doing those things. And I knew that I'm fighting my sort of tribal insular culture and my poverty culture to sort of isolate and be insular and not be...what I would think of as prying. So that was the challenge. It was like you are not prying you are caring." Matthew

Value Conflict/ Sense of Self as Counselor

“I don't know how to explain culture norms or culture background and be like, ‘You know, I still live with my parents,’ and not feel kind of ashamed about it because in my culture that's normal. We don't leave until we get married. Even little things like that, having to explain myself all the time and be like, ‘Wait, I know you have your own apartment, you're younger than me. But like in my culture that's okay.’ Just not having to explain all the time.” Mary

“How do I be in my religion that I value and love and make sense of this other stuff and bring understanding to other people when I think a lot of the times the stuff from certain professors or certain people is like, ‘We need to fix these people of their wrong way of thinking.’ It seems like it's almost reverse discrimination of that, like, we can't tell other people how to live their lives and what's right or wrong but we're going to tell the LDS people that what they believe which is homosexuality is a sin, is wrong” Beth

“It's making me think differently. I've always been pretty easy going to begin with, but I mean and I think more so than the further I get into this program it's kind of hard to be around a lot of other White people. Like it was hard to be around some White people to begin with or just people in general to begin with, but just like you have friends that just say things without thinking and now when they say things it's just like ... It's a little uncomfortable at first, but now you know you're really making me uncomfortable. You can't just say things, you're hurting people. It makes you look at just diversity and any kind of 'isms.” Amy

Sharing the Minority Experience

“So that's what I have to learn, I have to learn how to have a blank face so my emotions aren't showing. I have to be aware of when there's some transference, counter-transference going on, but I think the most important thing I'm learning is that I don't always have to let somebody else processing something that they go through, I don't always have to relate that to one of my experiences to be able to share with that person's empathy. Because I'm leaving the present and going into my past and not being attentive to what they're processing. So that's one of the best lessons that I'm learning.” Gee

“I was like, “Can I face this? Can I even help someone in this situation?” And as much as I was hurting for them, I was okay. I didn't cry, breakdown. I was like, “Let's get to business.” Like, “Let me help you out whatever I can.” The focus was not on me or my feelings. It was just right on them.” Ysera

“I've lived a lot of this junk and I know what it's like to be able to impart the information that I learned growing up, and how I feel, and how I know what it's like to suffer, and I know what it's like to have a jerk make fun of you or whatever and how horrible that feels, so I didn't want to be that.” Rose

“I’m happy to share my experiences. I think that’s part of the drive too that I’ve got to realize as a counselor is take the focus off me and really put it on the client. It’s their experience. It’s their know-how, Yeah, I have a lot, probably a lot of good advice to offer, but that’s kind of a big no-no.” Dave

Expectations

Counselors/ Faculty

“I was kind of like the client in the class and he was like the therapist, if you could put it that way. The therapist is not supposed to preach to the client and he was. I was just trying to receive knowledge from him and information and he just kind of pushed his own beliefs in there.” Mae

”But pretty much going into the counseling program, I already figured most of the professors would be allies for the LGBT Community, at least I would hope. I don’t really know why you go into counseling and not be supportive of diverse people.” Olivia

“But it’s interesting though that as a bunch of counselors in training, sometimes we in our sessions might be able to create that environment but we don’t do it in our classroom and that’s on the pitfall of the students and sometimes even maybe people that are running the show.” Beth

Peers/ Counselors in Training

“We’re in a counseling program and people are supposed to be more empathetic, and kind of reach out more, listen” Mary

“I think that comes, too, with being in a roomful of counselors in training and you just want to talk to people, because you’re like, ‘Oh man, this is a horrible day I had today,’ and you want to share that with each other.” Rose

“That can be a little bit disheartening sometimes, especially as a counselor or going to be a future counselor, in a room with other future counselors, that maybe they’re missing some subtle, not discrimination, but just things that maybe they should pick up on, but they’re not going to because they’re not really a part of the community.” Olivia

Self

“I’m not going to school just to pass classes. I’m going to excel at classes. I want to be the best. I want to be in the top 5% of the graduating class, not just settle for a passing grade, because I’m invested in learning” Gee

Round One Themes

Past Trauma/ Lived Experiences/ Minority Experiences	Support and Validation	Congruence/ Coming Out/ Being Open	Critical Incident/ Defining Moment	Quitting/ Questioning	Responsibility	Relationship with Minority Status	Cultural Norms	Expectations
Effect in class/Program	Lack of and Seeking others Like Self	Choosing to Speak or Remain Silent in Class	Affirming/ Confirming Experience		To Self	Length of Time	Counseling Micro Aggressions	Counselors/ Faculty
Personal Counseling/ Experience with a Counselor	Self/ Spirituality/ Coping Skills	Intentional Self Disclosure	Isolating Experience		To Educating Majority	Past Minority Experience	Counseling Norms vs. Cultural Norms	Peers/ Counselors in Training
Reason for Becoming a Counselor in Training	Faculty, Supervisors, Internship, Program (positive and not)	Awareness of effect of Self on Class/ Others	Relational Experience		To advocacy of Minority	Level of Comfort with Minority Group	Value Conflict/ Sense of Self as Counselor	
	Cohort/ Peers (positive and not)	Fear of Rejection			Of Speaking as a Member of the Minority	Level of Comfort with Majority Group	Sharing the Minority Experience	
					To Others			

APPENDIX E

Second Round Interview Questions

- 1.) What are your reactions to the themes?
- 2.) What are your reactions to the quotes I pulled?
- 3.) What is missing?
- 4.) What would you change?
- 5.) How has your experience been since our first interview?
- 6.) What do you think you need me to know in order to really understand your experience?
- 7.) What would the overall theme of your master's experience be for you?
- 8.) Do you have any artistic/creative examples of your experience?

APPENDIX F

Second Member Check Information Regarding Second Round Themes

APPENDIX G

Third Round Interview Questions

- 1.) What were your reactions to the new changes in the themes?
- 2.) Is there anything you think is missing?
- 3.) Is there anything you would change?
- 4.) Have there been any new developments in your experiences as a minority student?